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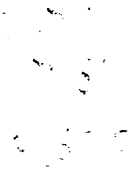

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# THE MASTER OF GRAY

*BY THE SAME AUTHOR.*

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LONGMANS, GREEN, AND CO.,

91 AND 93 FIFTH AVENUE, NEW YORK,

LONDON AND BOMBAY.

# THE MASTER OF GRAY

BY

H. C. BAILEY

AUTHOR OF "MY LADY OF ORANGE"

LONGMANS, GREEN, AND CO.

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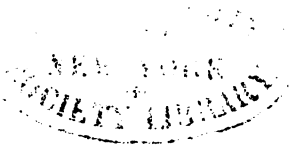

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# THE MASTER OF GRAY.

## HOW MAISTER ALEXANDER FERGUSON SAT DOWN BY THE WATER OF LEITH.

GODLY Maister Alexander Ferguson thought, as was right, of the Scripture, and remembered Zion. Never to Jew in Babylonia was the memory of Zion so bitter, for Maister Ferguson's Zion was but two poor hundred yards from where he lay. He lay amid beauty. Clear on the foaming, sparkling water at his feet the summer moonlight shone, cleaving the red crags that bore high above him rank upon rank of whispering trees. Maister Ferguson, blind to beauty, shivered amain; very clearly he remembered Zion; for he had on him no more than a shirt. Wriggling painfully on the rocks he turned to look at Zion. Zion was dark as the grave. Zion had gone to bed.

Maister Ferguson groaned and spluttered, but he said never a word, he moved never an inch. At this no man need wonder, for his jaws were fixed asunder by a cloth, and legs and arms strove vainly with an efficient rope. Godly Maister Ferguson had in mind psalms of commination.

Memory failing speedily he strove to persuade a reluctant mind that he had no cause for cursing. Indeed he had had his victory over the men of Belial. Under the gag he tried to chuckle. For the traitors, the minions of Jezebel, were in worse plight than he. Kirkcaldy of Grange, Maitland of Lethington—they had taken arms for Mary and the devil against Master John Knox and his God. Truly, they had their reward. Alexander Ferguson, all unworthy, had seen their red flag fall from the ramparts fluttering to the dust, seen St. David's Tower reel and totter and go roaring down the crag, seen the walls of the castle run like a sandy brae. Even there in his bonds he shook with joy as he thought of Jezebel when she heard the tidings—Mary bereft of her last soldier, a lonely prisoner in an English castle. He wondered if Jezebel would weep.

Then he recalled the past glorious day. In the forefront of the howling mob in the Lawnmarket he had been when Grange and Lethington went by beaten and broken men. As befitted a minister of God, his voice had led the jeers; his voice had rung loudest:—

"Stane the loons, stane the loons, let them tak' no rest!" At Lethington's litter, with its burden of a dying man, he had flung the first stone.

"That for Mitchell Wylie! That for Mitchell Wylie's sair feet!" he had cried—and suddenly, as he remembered it with pride, he moved in his bonds. Suddenly he perceived a connection between that stone and the gag and the rope and his vanished

hose. He recognised himself with surprise as a martyr.

For that stone had but left his hand, that cry his lips, when a lad, beautiful as a girl, thrusting forward beside him, had asked a woman his name.

"'Tis the godly Maister Alexander Ferguson!" And he had turned and said:—

"Master Ferguson am I, boy, minister of God."

"I could not doubt that, sir," said the boy, and smiled, and he too flung his stone. But the stone went strangely awry, and it struck not Maitland of Lethington, but the captain of the guard. Whereof came the rattle of oaths and English pikemen falling vehemently on the mob, so that godly Maister Ferguson had gone incontinent home to Dean.

Now what was strange in this was not that a boy had missed his aim, but that the boy—Maister Ferguson knew it but that moment—was the very same as he who had come to Dean after sunset much distraught begging with a boy's eagerness that godly Maister Ferguson would go to the aid of a penitent sinner, Kirkcaldy of Grange. The boy, Maister Ferguson reflected sorrowfully, had seemed very godly; even yet, spite of lost hose, there was sweetness left in his words:—

"'Tis for you Grange cries, sir; now that Master John Knox is gone there is none but you, he saith, can deal with his soul."

"Grange?" Maister Ferguson had made answer. "Ay, to him I will go, for of his soul Master Knox had hopes. But for the other, your Mitchell Wylie, bid

me not to him, boy, for good Master Knox had no warrant that ever he should do well. Nor have I, boy, nor I."

"Truly Master Knox was of God's council," said the boy, and smiled.

So they went out together before the moon was up—and then (Maister Ferguson wriggled as he remembered) sudden a hand had fallen on his mouth from behind; another gripped at his throat. While he struggled vainly, spluttering, against a man whom he could not see, the boy plucked off his furred cloak and doublet. Followed his hose.

Godly Maister Ferguson reflecting on these things, and remembering now the face of the boy, beheld in himself not the victim of thieves, but the martyr of Jezebel. This ill fate he conceived had come on him for casting scorn at Mitchell Wylie. As the night passed he grew proud and happy and exceeding stiff.

That summer night was shamed. Two miles away from Maister Ferguson the Kirkgate was dark with surging heads. Shouts rang loud, and laughter. Now it was a taunt for the craft of Mitchell Wylie, taken in the toils at last. Now a jeer at his palsied limbs. Now something none too clean on his wife. The godly of Edinburgh did after their kind. Inspired by its wit, the crowd surged forward to a narrow door, through which to the turn of the stair ruddled steps glowed in the moonlight. Then a halberd glimmered an instant on the stair ere the door clashed.

"Musketeers! Port your weapons!" The order rang loud above all the din. The crowd wavered this way and that. The door of the stairway fell open again. "Pikemen! Left and right!" Out to the street came the pikemen filing to either hand. On the toes of that venturous crowd rang pike-butts. Overhead muskets looked venomous down from the barred windows. "Clear the street!" said a voice from a window quietly.

No pike-butts then, but points met the godly of Edinburgh. No fair words from their English allies, but vigorous oaths. Down to the door came an officer. Either way he looked at the crowd driven howling back. Out to the clear space before the house he passed.

"Foul fall them! Can they not let a man die in peace?" he muttered, glowering. Then at his very elbow a soft voice answered at once:—

"'Let him not go down to his grave in peace,' it is written." The officer started and turned quickly. Alone, beside him in the empty street, stood a minister.

"God's death, sirrah! How came you here?" The minister shrugged his shoulders lightly and smiled.

"Up a stair, down a stair. Does it matter?" he said in the same musical voice. "I come to one who needs me much — Sir William Maitland of Lethington."

"In the fiend's name, who are you?"

"Alexander Ferguson, minister of Dean."

"On what errand?"

"To save a soul." The officer laughed in his face.

"Lethington's soul? God aid us! Where to find it?"

"Sir William Drury," said the minister gravely, "would you have the devil find it in hell?"

"Old friends meeting, Sir Minister!"

"Sir William, would you jest with a dying man's salvation?" cried the minister.

"Why, the dying man did it an hour agone!"

The minister flung up his hands:—

"Alack! *in ipsa hora mortis!*" he cried. "Sir William, good Sir William, let me see him speedily! Alack for the flower of our Scottis wits gone an ill gait!" He caught Drury's arm. "Sir William, Sir William, of Christian charity bear him word that I, Alexander Ferguson, would speak with him of his soul!" Sir William looked at him closely. This Alexander Ferguson was slim, beardless and beautiful. His foot tapped impatiently on the ground.

"God's death! then, if he will he shall—but if not, Sir Minister, fiend seize me if I let you plague a dying man!"

"He will! He will! Only tell him I am Alexander Ferguson. That will tell him much. And—and—" he fumbled in his clothes, even under his doublet—"and give him this." He held out a scrap of parchment. Sir William took it and looked sharply at the minister. Then he tried to read it. "'Tis Latin," said the minister quickly.

"Oh, Latin?"

The minister pointed: "'Sis MemoR.' 'Remember.'"

"Why are the letters big?"

"'Tis Latin," said the minister. Sir William went in alone.

The street was clear now, but beyond the pikes at either end the mob still shouted its shame. The minister looked either way:—

"*Canaille!*" he muttered; then heard his name cried from above.

In the flickering candle-light of a little room he saw white hands, swollen and gnarled, lie along the bed. White, wasted, marked with a thousand wrinkles was the face hidden behind the door. Dull eyes turned to him, but the head lay still.

"*Num immemor fui?*" said a faint voice when the door was shut. The minister bowed. "You?" said the voice, a little more eager.

"I am the Master of Gray, sir," said the minister, and he knelt by the bed. Slowly a hand moved to the table and placed the candles so that the light fell on Gray's face. For a long while Lethington's dull eyes scanned the beautiful features: he said nothing. "I come from the Queen, sir. This I am bidden tell you, 'she hath your service in more regard than her own life: she grieves for your sickness, and——'" He hesitated.

"And?" said the dull voice from the bed.

"'And prays that you may be healed,'" said Gray slowly. Lethington laughed.

"The Queen knew that we must fail?"

"She hoped——" Lethington muttered to himself: names of men Gray heard, now a scrap of Latin or French, and the knotted fingers drew together.

"All's done, all's done! . . . Dust . . . dust . . . dust on the wheels of time . . ."

"Sir, sir—a thing more. I have it in charge to tell you that your Lady shall lack nothing—and this from the Queen." Lethington's eyes brightened.

"Mary . . ." he said, and smiled. In a moment he turned to Gray. "Tell the Queen I thank her. I grieve for nothing but that I served her no better, that I can serve her no more . . . And Mary—nay, Mary will know," and he smiled. Gray bent his head —then slipped his hand inside his doublet.

"It shall be told, sir. And yet is one thing more." He looked round the room, then held out in his palm a golden locket, and bending over Lethington he whispered: "Sir, should they mean you shame, these English—" he met Lethington's eyes: lower still fell his voice—"herein is death, such as his *sorbitio tollit quem dira cicutae*," and he glanced round anxiously. Lethington turned the big locket over clumsily with his gnarled fingers—took it—hid it in his gown. And he muttered to himself in Greek:—

"*Ἤματί κεν τριτάτῳ* . . . ay, the third day. He and the Christ. Strange that," and he smiled. Then turned to Gray and touched the lad's arm. "Sir, I forget courtesy. First and last I thank you. I fear you have run much danger for me——"

"For our cause, sir," said Gray proudly. Again Lethington scanned his face.

"You are of our cause?" the dull voice asked. Gray flushed.

"Should I be here?" he cried. Lethington watched him still.

"See whither it leads," and he tapped the pocket in his gown.

"I have chosen, sir." Still Lethington watched him, and for a while said nothing. At last painfully he put out his hand and touched Gray's.

"Hold to it, hold to it! Naught else will help at the last. Presbyter, priest—God is not bigot, God is not fool. The kept faith—the kept faith . . ." While he spoke his glance still lingered on Gray's face, and he stopped suddenly. Gray seemed to pity him. The two watched each other still a moment longer till a knock came at the door.

"Master Ferguson! Master Ferguson!" Gray sprang up. "Are the works of salvation done?"

"Done at last," said Lethington. He tried to move; Gray bent over him. "Put out the light. Turn me to the wall. I thank you. A good night, a good night."

Once in the street, once passed the guards, Gray shrugged his shoulders and laughed, looking back at the little dark, barred window.

"Kept faith! Kept faith!" said he, and he slipped out of the crowd down the Tolbooth Wynd.

To the hour of his death Maister Ferguson strove vainly with malicious, immortal rumour that he had soothed the last hours of Mitchell Wylie, that traitor manifold.

## CHAPTER I.

### THE NOBLE ARMY OF MARTYRS.

THERE was a little prie-dieu in the corner of the room, where a man knelt muttering, and a silver crucifix shone in the candle-light. At the table, poring over many papers, sat two men more. A knock sounded. The prayer and the reading stopped. From his prie-dieu, silent as a cat, the man came to the door. He knocked on it twice.

"*In nomine patris*," said a voice from without.

"*Et filii*." The bolts shot back. "Enter, my son."

Crimson cloaked, belted with broidered gold, he entered. They looked at each other. He at them.

"Well, Father Gaspar?" he said in French. Father Gaspar shook his head. "Father William?" Father William shook his head. "*Dame!* Father Edmund?" Father Edmund groaned. "Humph! So the heretics still prevail?" he said, and sat down.

"Alas, my son!" said Father Edmund.

"The wicked flourish," said Father William.

"It appears there is no change—and no hope, my father?"

"None," said Father Edmund—"save——"

"The infinite power of God," said Father William. Under the crimson cloak was a shrug of the shoulders.

Father Gaspar leant forward, tapped on the velvet sleeve:—

"Working on a faithful child of the Church," said he, "should so inflame his zeal, Philippe, that he seek a martyr's crown, my son." Philippe's eyes glittered.

"I would be loath you should attempt aught to your own destruction, my son," said Father William. Philippe bowed. "Yet on the bright roll of saints, in the noble army of martyrs, will be no nobler name than his by whom the woman Elizabeth, born in shame, scourge of the faithful, shall be made to sin no more." Philippe sighed.

"Alas! I am not worthy," said he. Father Gaspar took his hand.

"Nay, my son, none worthier," he said.

"You are too kind, my father. But many there are —Parry, Morgan, Gifford, your Master of Gray——"

"Patrick?" said Father William—"Patrick?" he muttered again, and looked at his brethren. "Patrick hath been less——"

The roar of an angry man sounded in the street. Then something scraped at the window. A foot came crashing through the glass and the priests sprang up.

"*In nomine patris!* By way of the gutter! *Et filii!* Oh, be not rash with thy fusillade!" A shot echoed down the street. "*Et—et—*" the casement burst inwards, and a man plunged laughing into Father Edmund's arms. "Into thy hands, my father!" he cried, panting, then sprang to the window again as many voices cried in the street.

"What is this, sir?" said Father Gaspar.

"That is the watch calling to M. le Patissier—and that—that is M. le Patissier calling to the watch. Deep calling unto deep. They misunderstand each other marvellously!" He broke off laughing. "Alas! it appears that M. le Patissier has shot a watchman! Ho, ho! Wherefore they remove M. le Patissier—still explaining—always explaining! The poor Patissier!" He turned chuckling away and flung himself down in a chair, dusting his clothes.

"What does this mean, sir?" said Father Gaspar.

"Eh? Biran, the wine. To the health of the brave Patissier! It means, my reverend fathers, that I was making a visit to Madame la Patissière. Well, Monsieur le Patissier, he appeared marvellously *mal à propos!*" He finished dusting himself and poured out another glass of wine. "But I interrupt—like M. le Patissier—you were saying when I came in——?" He looked round smiling. "Eh, did I intrude? Biran, perhaps, was about to demand the martyr's crown? My dear Biran, I am no rival. Die in quarters—you have my best wishes."

"Patrick, Patrick, do not jest of the death that the sainted Campion died," said Father Gaspar. Gray laughed.

"Saint Campion! Well, rest him! I admire him—dead. My dear Biran, die and accept my admiration—but my fathers, am I sent for but to bid adieu to Biran? May I go then and dry the tears of my Patissière?"

"Is this time for such jesting?" said Father William. "Jezebel, the scourge of the Church——"

"Is firmer than ever on the throne," said Father Gaspar.

"A scourge on a throne, Biran! Most inept."

"Be serious or go!" cried Father Gaspar. Gray bowed.

"Biran, pray move. You make me smile."

"Lennox has failed in Scotland, Gray," said Father Edmund, looking at him keenly. Gray waved his hand.

"Lennox—I told you Lennox was sheep. I told you, I tell you, nought will go well in Scotland." He sipped the wine. His dark eyes glowed. "What Lethington and Kirkcaldy could not do, shall Father Gaspar and Lennox do it?"

"The Duc de Guise," said Biran.

"Bah! The Duc de Guise—an old man's butcher, Biran! *Mordieu!* Your Duc de Guise, he is like the millennium—always expected."

"Monsieur!" cried Biran, hand on his sword.

"Monsieur—*à la bonne heure!* I talk policy. Endeavour to understand. Well, my fathers, what then?" He leant back smiling, hand on his wine cup.

"My son, in the providence of God," said Father William.

"We may yet hope——" said Father Gaspar.

"For a Bothwellhaugh, an efficient assassin? Why, you have found so many of another kind! Well, but then? The dear Elizabeth with a cut throat—then, then? *Têtedieu!* I will tell you. The dagger for Burghley and Walsingham too. But Mary, Mary above all! Without her, without a Queen, we are

cutthroats, bravos of the streets. With her, heroes, paladins! Get half a hundred good swords—snatch her from prison—see that Scrope and Dacre and Howard rise on the border—we will fight Carberry Hill again, we with a Queen and a cause against a dead woman, a dead loyalty. 'Tis in England we win or lose. Waste no more good labour and good lies on Scotland! England! Mary!" The priests looked at each other.

"It is well thought on," said Father Edmund at last; but the others were doubting. "Since all is over in Scotland——"

"All is not over!" cried Biran. "The Earl of Arran——"

"Friend of the heretic ministers——"

"Friend of the Duc de Guise! Yes! He professes himself the friend of the Church——" Gray laughed.

"And asks for money," said he. Biran glared.

"The Church has many faithful sons in Scotland," said Father Gaspar. Gray laughed.

"Scotland! And where is Queen Mary?"

"Prisoned! Guarded, triple-guarded, night and day," cried Biran. Gray sipped his wine.

"M. de Biran, suffer me to inform you that you lie—oh, from ignorance, M. de Biran, pure ignorance as ever!"

"She is free?" they cried.

"Again, gentlemen, pure ignorance! Prisoned, yes. Guarded, no."

"No doubt M. de Gray can prove it," growled Biran.

"My dear Biran is impatient to behold himself a liar. I will gratify him."

"Ay, and how?"

"From the papers of Sir Henry Cobham, the ambassador of Elizabeth, my dear Biran—which I have not seen. Well, I came by the window—I go by the door. Biran, I kiss your beautiful hands. My fathers, your blessing I take in place of my hat (a keepsake for Madame la Patissière). To our meeting!"

When he was gone, M. de Biran drew closer to Father Edmund:—

"He was ever—very sure—that Lennox would fall," said he. The conspirators sat long. For the hundredth time they debated of treachery.

## CHAPTER II.

### OF A KNIGHT-ERRANT.

THE Master of Gray dressed himself leisurely, laughing sometimes at his face in the glass. He put on a cloak of golden velvet, and stepped back to see it entire; but as he moved his eyes fell on a little painting beside the mirror. It was the face of a girl he saw; blood glowed in the full lips, tinged the cheek that shone white against a cloud of ruddy hair; her brown eyes were sparkling. With his hand at his throat, Gray stopped; neglected his own beauty for hers.

"God be good! She will be changed now, the poor Mary!" he muttered. "Well—!" and he turned again to the glass. In a moment he flung off the golden cloak. "It is not now a question of Madame la Patissière," said he, and he changed it for a dark russet. He touched his black curls a last time and was satisfied.

In the hall of the Louvre was a pageant to come. Diamonds and white necks shone amid cloth of gold, beards dyed with vermilion and ears bejewelled. The Master of Gray, whose ears, as he knew, needed no jewels, was prodigal of smiles and dainty whisperings. But his glance was restless. Hither and thither he moved among the outskirts of the crowd that clung

around the green carpet where the pageant was to be. At last, as ten lacqueys set down an alabaster fountain in the midst, he saw something that gave him pause. It was a man in black, thin and erect, who walked right on, careless of eyes, to the lolling jewel-laden King. Clinging close to his arm was a girl, tall as he. Her dress was silver-grey, and it showed scarce more of her beauty than the slim white neck; for all her jewels a simple gold chain fell over her breast. All round she looked eagerly, while the colour changed like a child's in her cheeks. Heavy about her head hung rippling russet hair.

The Master of Gray appeared to have what he had awaited, for now he came quickly to a lady who had smiled at him from afar more than once, and he sadly deranged a cavalier who had been happy.

"Lady, pity me, for I am come but now," he said laughing, and bowed and kissed her hand. "Faith, how can other beauties dare show? Why, Biran! My dear Biran! What a pleasant summer we are having!" The lady laughed, and put a jewelled hand to her black hair. M. de Biran scowled. "I do trust our dear Biran has been interesting?"

"M. de Biran is a matchless cavalier, sir; he has spoken of you."

"The good Biran! He is so open-hearted! But I fear Lady Kinaldie has been wearied?"

"Lady Kinaldie is concerned for the welfare of the *patissier*," said Biran.

"What! and you omitted to inform yourself? Oh, Biran! To begin a tale with no catastrophe! M.

de Biran, you afflict me, me and Aristotle. Pray, pardon M. de Biran, lady, so little skill he has with your sex."

"Pray, how do you know that?" said Lady Kinaldie.

"How do I know the water is wet? How do I know the fire is hot? How, in fact, do I know you are the beauty of France, *toute seule?*" and he bowed. The woman's black eyes shone, and she smiled. She fluttered a scarlet fan a moment, and the red light glowed on her breast. Biran bit his lip. Then she laughed, and the rubies on her neck quivered and flashed. The fan fell.

"Beauty, sir? I think there is one at least has better claim."

Biran looked round the room. Gray laughed in her face.

"A miracle—no! Of them the good God is tired." She laid her hand on his arm. The two beautiful dark heads drew close.

"See," she said, and pointed his eyes to the girl in grey. He watched a moment, and when he turned he found her looking up at him eagerly.

"Indeed she is fair," he said, and at once she let his arm go.

"See, M. de Biran!" she said sharply. Biran looked scarce an instant, and when he turned he smiled upon Gray.

"That—that!" he cried. "Why, 'tis but a vine-pole."

"And the grapes of it are sour, eh, Biran?"

"Fie, sir! To M. de Biran, hero of a thousand victories."

"Anonymous, *quand même*. The vine-pole? She would look over dear Biran's head and say, 'Little boy, go play!'"

"Monsieur de Gray!" Biran's olive cheek grew darker.

"Dear Biran! Must we meet again?" he paused, smiling. Lady Kinaldie put out her hand.

"Sir, you forget yourself—and me." Gray bowed. "I have heard of M. de Biran—ah, too much perhaps!" Her eyes drooped. "What is a girl against him?"

"Or what is a daisy to a calf?" Gray muttered.

"Monsieur, now at least——"

"Ah, Biran, Biran, remember the last time."

"But the next——"

"The next will never come, Biran."

"And why?"

"Because you will be careful to evade it. You remember?"—he made a pass with his hand. "So—and so—"

"It shall come, sir." Gray shrugged his shoulders.

"M. de Biran, you make a noise. Make it—elsewhere." And he turned his back. Lady Kinaldie had said no more. Only she looked from one to the other with sparkling eyes. Biran turned away and muttered oaths.

"Ah, Biran," said Gray over his shoulder. "Biran! Perhaps I shall not see you again." Biran paused. Then Gray caught his arm. "It shall come, monsieur, it shall come—in one case only—if aught befalls the girl in grey," he hissed in Biran's ear. Biran broke from him and looked at Lady Kinaldie. She had

grown pale, but she made him no sign, and he broke through the crowd. Gray turned to her smiling.

"Our dear Biran!" said he. Lady Kinaldie fanned herself.

"He is not a coward," she said sharply.

"Oh, precisely!" Lady Kinaldie stopped her fan. "Precisely!"

"You mean——?"

"I mean—is he gone? yes—I mean, dear lady, he will now insult a thin but innocent girl. Perhaps she has friends. They will slay our dear Biran. Perhaps she has not. I shall. He incommodes me infinitely, our Biran."

"What is the girl to you?" He looked at her, and he did not answer at once, but let the smile grow on his lips.

"Tool. Tool," he said. "Implement of the art diplomatic. Whereby," and he laughed and looked round, "whereby we are quit of Biran. See!" Already Biran was being presented to the girl in grey. Lady Kinaldie looked at the girl, looked back again at the Master of Gray. But he laughed frankly. "Do not steal my stolen hours!" he cried, and he offered her his arm. They passed out to the gallery.

"You mistake M. de Biran," she said. His arm drew her closer. "And some day——" She looked up at him. His glance rested on a lad close by. He nodded. She drew away. "Ah! and how many of us are tools?" she cried sharply.

"Dear lady! All but those whom—" his hand

closed firm on hers as they came into shadow—"God has made too beautiful—too dear." He bent over her and saw her white breast tremble in the gloom. He smiled. "Ah, why will you make a friend of Biran?" She laughed happily.

"Do I? . . . And may I not?"

"Alas! Yes." He sighed, and led her to a recess; but that moment hurrying steps came after him.

"The Master of Gray?" Gray rose with a muttered oath.

"Oh! You, Ogilvy!" It was the lad to whom he had nodded. "What, then?"

"M. de Mauvissière is crying for you, sir."

"M. de Mauvissière be—eh?" A cry came faintly down the gallery. "Well, need he send the crier round? Oh, my lady, pity me!" He vanished in the shadow, and the lad was following when the lady said softly:—

"Monsieur! . . . And is it your Scottish way to leave a lady to find her way alone?" The lad came smiling.

"Pardon, my lady."

"Or perhaps M. de Mauvissière needs you also?"

"I think M. de Mauvissière may be content without me," said the lad, and he bowed. The light fell flickering on her neck. She looked up at him, from under her long dark lashes.

"Is it possible? Then, pray, take me to the hall." He offered his arm. "To the left, monsieur! Are you lost? And, fie, are you lame? A thought quicker, monsieur, of charity! So—we behold M. de

Mauvissière. We do not see M. de Gray." She looked at the lad and laughed, but her face was flushed. "So brilliant a device, monsieur. I make my compliments." She swept a low curtsey and turned quickly away from him. Ogilvy bit his lip.

But the Master of Gray was in good fortune, for some part of M. de Biran he knew, and that part of M. de Biran guided his doings that night, and launched the Master of Gray prosperously on his voyage—the great voyage of his life.

As he hurried whence that first faint cry had come, he heard another. Into a little chamber he burst, and he saw the girl, her cheeks aflame, in Biran's arms. M. de Biran strove to kiss her neck. Heavy with gold and jewels a chain swung whistling across Biran's eyes, and he reeled back blind and cursing.

"Ah, mademoiselle, pardon," cried Gray, and bowing he led the trembling girl from the room. Biran sprang at him from behind, drawing his sword. Gray heard it, swung round unarmed, crying, "Go, mademoiselle," and caught the sword hand. For a moment the two swung this way and that. "Shall I call the guard, Biran? Will you sleep in the Châtelet? *Mordieu!* Coward!" and he flung the man down on the hearth. "Ah, lie then," for Biran was stunned. The Master of Gray came back to his tool.

"Monsieur, he has not hurt you?" she cried, and he saw her grey eyes shining, he felt her hand on his.

"Forgive me," he said, pressing her hand.

"Forgive?" He remembered.

"Forgive us all who are men that you should have

suffered this," and he bowed, offering his arm, for he heard Biran move. Hesitating, she took it, and they walked slowly down the corridor.

"Forgive? I do not understand," he saw her eyes question frankly. "You are not to blame . . . I thank you, I thank you very much."

"At least, forget, mademoiselle. It was nothing." He laughed a little. "Only that M. de Biran has sinned—for the last time."

"You did not——" she cried in English, then turned again to French. "You have not killed him?"

"Why? You are English?" he cried, in happy surprise. It was well played.

"Yes, and you?" Her hand pressed close on his arm.

"No better than a poor Scotsman," he said, and he laughed. "The Master of Gray. Indeed, it is good to hear the old words!" She smiled at him.

"Yes . . . " and their eyes met. "I—I am May Cobham." He bowed, and led her down another gallery, not on their way. "But that man—you did not kill him?"

"It is to come," said the Master of Gray.

"Ah, no!"

"Believe me, it would be better."

"No—no—not that! It is enough. I pray you, sir." For a moment she saw his face still stern, and then he bowed.

"No need of that, lady. It is as you will."

"Thank you," she said again. "Is that the hall?" The Master of Gray admitted sorrowfully that it was. At the door they paused.

In a blaze of light in the midst Diana and her nymphs danced about the alabaster fountain—Diana in cloth of silver and gold, with pearls shimmering in her hair and a turquoise bow in her hand, Diana white bosomed and lovely led her nymphs as they swayed lightly to the music, and they let the clear white gauze fall about them this way and that, shameless and beautiful. Gray saw the girl's face flush.

"It is hot in the hall," he said. "Will you walk on the terrace till the dance is done?" She turned quickly, and moved away without a word.

Out into the night they passed silently, and Gray did not seek to see her face. On the terrace he paused and looked up at the clear sky.

"See, there is the North Star, and under it my land and yours," he said softly.

"Yes, England," she said, and sighed.

"England—I have never seen it. I know the mountains and the heather—but you, why, you have no heather and only little hills," and he laughed.

"But we have," she cried. "I could show you heather, purple and pink and white, like waves on the sea," and she looked at him, smiling. But he sighed heavily.

"I can see it," he muttered. The smile hung on her lips, but her eyes were dark and tender.

"Some day—" she hesitated, and he did not heed—"it is very sweet."

"Ay," he muttered.

"Some day—perhaps—I will show you—oh, ours is sweet! There, under the North Star." She pointed,

her arm shining white in the starlight as the lace fell away. He looked into her eyes and quickly turned away.

"Perhaps," he said hoarsely. They stood together awhile in silence. At last the sound of the music died away. "The dance is done," he said. "Yes, the dance is done." She did not move. "Shall I—but—but before—shall I see you ever in Paris? Do you come to the Louvre often? Ah, will you be here to-morrow?"

"To-morrow? We go to M. de Mauvissière."

"M. de Mauvissière? Then I shall—see you. *À demain!*" She bowed a little, and they came back again to the hall. Through the scattering crowd they came easily to a man standing stiffly to the left of the King.

"My father, Sir Henry Cobham—the Master of Gray," said the girl. Gray caught the flash of his eye as he bowed.

"I have heard of the Master of Gray," said Sir Henry.

"Little good, I fear, sir," said the Master of Gray.

"And why?"

"I have so many friends, sir," and he bowed himself away.

Walking back down the hall with puckered brow he ran into the arms of a friend.

"My dear Gray! Is it that mademoiselle is unkind?" cried M. de Tonnay.

"It is, de Tonnay, that the world is highly inferior."

"And why?"

"Because one cannot be in two places at once," and he passed on frowning still. Close by the door he caught sight of M. de Biran, who, in spite of bruises visible and invisible, conversed with Lady Kinaldie. The Master of Gray smiled as he saw them look at him and saw how.

"Decidedly it would be wrong to eliminate the dear Biran," he remarked to himself. "He is continually interesting."

## CHAPTER III.

### HOW LOGAN OF RESTALRIG SAW THE ERRORS OF ROME.

LOGAN of Restalrig was amused, and the whole house knew it. His great shoulders swayed and his face grew red as he slapped his hand on the table and flung himself back so that the chair complained. His companion was less amused—he giggled feebly in deference.

"Good, curse me, good! So Holy Church feared 'she had not his whole heart'. Here be Solomons!" He chuckled, and then leant forward again, his heavy dark eyebrows lowering. "Well, Master Griffiths, what then?" Griffiths, a lean little man with sandy hair and beard, wriggled backwards. His arms and legs were tied. Logan tapped the table.

"Oh, so, my lord—so, my lord," Griffiths stammered, "I was sent to—to—to—"

"Spy. A little unfortunate for you, Master Griffiths. . . . Eh?" The little man trembled. Logan frowned. "You are superfluous—quite—superfluous, Master Griffiths."

"Oh, my lord," the little man gasped.

"Moreover, you are not beautiful, Master Griffiths. I am an amateur of beauty. That face distresses me—that hair—that voice! And the legs—what legs!—

oh, the devil—the legs decide me!" He sprang up, and the little man cried out, but the door opened quickly and in came the Master of Gray.

"Aha! Now, Master Griffiths—a while ago you yearned after the Master of Gray—here he is!"

"What is this, Logan?" Logan picked up Master Griffiths and flung him into the next room.

"That was stalking you, my dear Patrick, when you went to the Louvre. I stalked that. You stalked, that stalked, I stalked. I stalked fastest. It calls itself Griffiths. I brought it back, and very instructive it has been." The Master of Gray sat down and rested his head on his hand.

"Yes?"

"Holy Church has had a revelation, Patrick. The good lady fears 'she has not your whole heart,'" he chuckled—"so said the Griffiths, Patrick. Hence the Griffiths. A genius christened Father Edmund set him to watch you. In fact, my dear Patrick, they suspect you damnably."

And the Master of Gray said:—

"How disheartening!"

"How unnatural!" said Logan, and he laughed.

"To one who has been a faithful servant, even while perceiving the errors of Rome."

"Oh, you perceive the errors?" said Logan.

"My dear Logan! Pray, perceive her errors."

"I always perceive errors. I perceived the Griffiths."

A servant tapped at the door and came in, and bowing he gave a little packet to Gray.

"Just brought, sir." Gray took it and turned it

over. He tore it open, and a scrap of paper fell out.

"'To the knight-errant,'" it said, in English. Within the cover was a little box. Gray flushed as he opened it.

"Ah!" he cried. Within was a ring set with one great emerald. He began to frown.

"Patrick, Patrick!" Logan chuckled, "it seems some one trusts you!" Gray turned the ring over very carefully.

"On the contrary, my dear Logan. It seems that some one mistrusts me considerably." Logan's jaw fell. Gray sprang to the window and looked out.

"Did you take a look at the messenger, Hugh?"

"He would not come in, sir."

Gray came back and sat down, waving the servant away. He took up the ring with the tips of his fingers.

"Logan, you see the errors of Rome," he said, and made the emerald flash.

"Devil take me! A delightful error."

"You think so? . . ." He drew out a glove and stuffed one finger with his handkerchief. Then, leaning on Logan's shoulder, holding it just before Logan's eyes, very slowly, very carefully, he thrust the stuffed finger through. As it pressed on one half the ring, from the other, from under the emerald, came out a little point. Logan swore heartily. Gray flung down the glove and laughed. "The errors of Rome—rather the error of M. de Biran. But indeed you are very

convenient, M. de Biran," and he put the ring carefully in its case.

"A Borgia ring!" muttered Logan.

"A little error—just a little error—my dear Logan. I trust you perceive the errors of Rome. I desire infinitely that you should perceive the errors of Rome."

"Eh? Why?" Gray put his head on one side and surveyed him critically.

"You would make a beautiful Huguenot—a beautiful persecuted Huguenot. Logan, be a Huguenot. Be persecuted. Be persecuted in the Rue de Ste. Geneviève. And make a noise about it. Oblige me, and be persecuted. But do not perish without a cry."

"Patrick, you are as difficult as the Apocalypse."

"On the contrary, I am as obvious as M. de Biran. The English Ambassador honours the Rue de Ste. Geneviève. To-morrow night I visit the English Ambassador. My dear Logan, it would be deplorable that a Protestant should be persecuted under his Protestant nose. Deplorable . . . but exceedingly convenient."

"Oho! . . . It seems you will be playing a game?" The gaiety faded from Gray's eyes.

"Yes, I shall be playing a game," he muttered—"I shall be playing a game." And he looked at the ground. Logan laughed loudly.

More loudly he began to sing:—

"The net is broken in pieces small,
And we are savit from their shame,
Oor hope was aye and ever sall
Be in the Lord and in His name.

Patrick, bloody Papist Patrick, I shall break the bonds of Rome!" he cried. "I see her errors—" Gray held up his hand.

"Hush! There is one behind the door."

"So there is! Come and look at it!" He took up the candles and they went in to see the little man huddled in the farthest corner. "Take a candle, Patrick! Now, would not the world be more beautiful if that were nourishing the daisies? The daisies and the beautiful violets, Master Griffiths!"

"Oh, my lords," cried the little man.

"Consider the lilies, Master Griffiths, how they would grow!"

"My lords, oh, my lords!"

"It would, however, interfere with his duty, Logan!"

"His duty! To spy on you!"

"Precisely. To spy on me. With discretion, Master Griffiths, always with discretion, you understand?"

The little man almost smiled.

"Ah, my lord, if I understand!"

"Good!" Gray cut his bonds and helped him to his feet. "Give him some wine, and let him go."

Logan went to fetch the wine.

"Oh, my lord, I swear—" cried Griffiths, catching at Gray's hand. Logan came back.

"Swear? Confound you, no. Be godly, Master Griffiths. Entirely godly. I do not desire to meet you in hell. Those legs! Oh, go to heaven, Master Griffiths, in charity!"

## CHAPTER IV.

### HOW THE MASTER OF GRAY WAS IN ONE PLACE AT A TIME.

THE Rue de Ste. Geneviève was dark. The Rue de Ste. Geneviève was silent. Here and there in the gloom beneath the jutting rooms stood men who seemed asleep. Far away from the streets by the river sounded the dolorous cry of the watch:—

Réveillez-vous, gens qui dormez,
Priez Dieu pour les trépassés!

But the Master of Gray was well awake, if he had few thoughts of prayer, and he knocked at the door of a house in the Rue de Ste. Geneviève loudly.

"I would see Sir Henry Cobham," he said in English.

"Sir Henry is with M. de Mauvissière, sir."

"How unfortunate!" said the Master of Gray, and stepped into the hall. He pulled out a little jewelled watch. "Sir Henry would prefer that I should wait," he muttered to himself. "Yes—" he looked up at the servant—"yes, I will wait for him." The servant appeared to hesitate, so the Master of Gray walked calmly in. "I am the Master of Gray," he said, and waited for a door to be opened. It was opened, and with a backward glance the servant left him alone.

On the instant the Master of Gray sprang up, and he was walking to the window when he stopped.

"My God!" he muttered, flushing, and caught at a chair. From the wall there looked down at him a woman's picture, a woman pale faced but smiling with a happy light in her grey eyes. Low on her neck fell coils of russet hair. Gray looked long. "It is beyond doubt her mother," he said aloud; then laughed and swept off his hat. "*Madame ma mère*, I salute you!" and he went on to the window. He opened the casement and tapped once on the pane. The dark statues under the eaves started to life. He whistled the first few notes of a song:—

Ho! Ho! Papegots!

A voice like thunder took it up:—

"Bah! Bah! Papegots!
Faites place aux Huguenots!"

Swaggering down the street, trolling it with all his voice, came Logan, looming mighty in the dark. And then on a sudden the Rue de Ste. Geneviève rang with oaths and war-cries and clashing steel. One poor Huguenot had fallen among a herd of Catholic bravos, and the poor Huguenot shouted lustily for help. Gray saw windows open all down the street and anxious heads look out. His foot tapped impatiently on the floor. The servant came running in behind him.

"What is it, sir, what is it?"

"A Papist devilry," cried Gray fiercely. And Logan lifted up his voice in English and French:—

"Help! *Au secours! Huguenots! Navarre!* Help!" over shouts of:—

"*Guise! Guise! Tuez!*"

The servant ran out crying to his comrade, and the two broke in on the fight as it went roaring down the street.

Then Gray snatched up a candle and hurried to the inner room. One glance he gave all around, and pounced on a little wooden coffer bound with iron. He shook it and it gave no sound. Smiling, he tried it with a key, then with another and another. It opened at last and showed many papers. Gray began to read.

His eyes glistened and his breath came fast. Feverishly he turned them over. He was learning much; learning how firm on her throne sat Elizabeth, spite of assassin and intrigue, Rome and Spain. For it seemed as he read that no one whispered in the Escurial or the Vatican but Walsingham knew it. Walsingham knew of Father William Crichton and Father Gaspar Holt, and knew very clearly how little they were to be feared. The plots they had spun in Paris, plots whereof Gray himself the sceptic had had good hope—Walsingham knew them all. What was even more to the purpose, Walsingham and Burghley knew with what kind of men they were fighting. Weak, fool, fanatic—there they were, all summed up in brief, sneering phrases. The names were in cypher, but Gray guessed them easily from the characters. He saw never so clearly how little hope there was for his own Queen Mary pining in her Derbyshire prison while these men who knew everything stood by Elizabeth's side. It was little hope that he wished to

see. But he seemed now to come back to reality. He had been in a world of phantasms and fantasies, now he came suddenly to the world of men and deeds. These hard Puritans with their "brothers in Christ" had conquered easily, would conquer always the elaborate conspiracies with a hundred distrustful fools behind each. Mary, the woman with her hot loves and hates, her wild plans, must ever be conquered by these cold statesmen, by her, colder even than they, the Queen whose faith, whose loves and hates were put off like a cloak when she came to act, who had no plans for the future at all, but saw the need of the hour, and met it in cynical courage.

So the Master of Gray, poring quick-breathed over the papers, perceived very clearly that he had chosen a lost cause; perceived that none the more dimly in that he had guessed it before, in that he was not sorry to find it true. Eh! Nothing in the world was irrevocable.

The noise of the fight grew fainter—an instant he stopped to listen—then sought hurriedly his own name. He found this:—

"Of maq thxomqf fr vfhk nought is known save a bruit when Sir W. Drury took Liddington to Leith."

"*Tant mieux!*" Gray muttered, and thrust the papers back. There were footsteps under the window. He shut the coffer again, locked it, put it carefully back to its place. And the while—

"The door open!" He heard cries. "The door open?" He sprang up. "'S death! What! A spy!" Before he could gain the outer room again

Sir Henry Cobham and another broke in, and the younger man ran at him, cursing, drawing his sword. The Master of Gray stood still.

"It would save many difficulties," he said, and he offered his breast to the thrust. It grazed along his side. "Ill played, sir," he said quietly. By the door he saw May Cobham. "Shall I stand in the light for you?" He came forward against the rapier point, and the light fell on his face. Sir Henry caught the swordsman's arm and the girl cried out. Gray bowed to each.

"Knave, who are you?" cried the swordsman. Gray bowed to him.

"Sir, I have not denied your right to kill—to question, that is different." Sir Henry fingered his beard.

"You cursed spy!" And at that May cried out.

"No, no!" The swordsman fired an angry glance at her. Gray turned a little.

"Lady, yes," he said, and he saw her pale and trembling. With a sudden cry of passion he turned to his foe. "*Mordieu!* make an end!" But the rapier fell before him, and the man flushed. "Nor that either!" Gray muttered, and flung himself into a chair.

Then Sir Henry turned to May.

"Go, child," he whispered. She clung to his hands and looked up at him through tears, and was gone. "Leave us alone, Frank." Frank put up his sword and went out slowly. Sir Henry stood over the Master of Gray.

"Now, sir—shall we play the comedy further?" he said.

"Comedy?" Wild eyes looked up at him; a wild laugh rang out. "God knows, 'tis none!" Sir Henry drew a chair to the table and sat down.

"Doubtless—God knows," he said slowly, and watched Gray. "You will, however, admit my right to know a little?" Gray looked up.

"You wonder why I am here?" Sir Henry shrugged his shoulders.

"But little!" he said.

"I was sent to steal your papers," said Gray, looking into his eyes.

"So much I had surmised."

"Well! Go to your cabinet—you will find them all." Sir Henry smiled.

"My apologies. We were premature. My daughter was tired."

"Ah!" The Master's eyes flashed. "Well—you will not believe—I shall tell you even so—I came because I asked that the task might be mine."

"You do me too much honour."

"I came—that the task might not be done at all."

"In fine—you desired rather to betray your friends than your enemy."

Gray was very pale: he sprang up.

"Sir, a moment ago I asked for death. I can bear that; this I cannot bear. *Mordieu!* do you think it is nothing that I play the traitor to every friend I have—nothing that I make every street in Paris a trap—nothing to know every true man scorns

me? Oh, you do not believe me. I am not mad. I see you are right . . . Well, we will make an end!" His dagger came flashing out, while Sir Henry watched, and he struck full at his own heart. But Sir Henry, springing to his feet, knocked the blow upwards, so little too soon that doublet and shirt were torn open, and a long line of red began to grow on the chest. Sir Henry snatched at his right hand and caught it, and for a moment the two men looked close into each other's eyes.

"It was no comedy," said Sir Henry. Gray laughed aloud. "I ask your pardon. I have said what I regret. Do not do what I must regret more." He let go his hold and sat down again. Gray stood a moment, his knuckles white on the dagger hilt, his bare chest heaving, and his eyes shone fiercely. Then, with a laugh, he flung the dagger down and fell into his chair.

"*Dame!* I am like a madman in romance—your pardon, sir"—he put out his hand in a calm gesture, but the hand was all trembling. Then his voice rose high again. "God! Can you guess how I am wrought? I am cheating the only friends I have for —for what? God help me, I do not know! Ah, my God!" It was a cry of honest pain. Sir Henry, leaning forward, touched his arm. "'Tis a proud part, sir, this—to say 'I am traitor: of your grace pity me!' You know who I am—scholar of the Jesuits, page of Guise, friend of Crichton and Holt—well, I come to you and I say 'I have chosen the wrong cause—help me to the right'." Sir Henry did not

answer: cold eyes turned on the unhappy Master of Gray, who writhed in his chair. "Ay! Light come, light go! That is my answer!" Gray cried. But Sir Henry held up his hand.

"No, sir," and there was silence a moment. "You say you had chosen the wrong cause. When did you know that—and how?" Gray drew back.

"Am I to betray my friends?" he cried.

"Should I trust you the more—for that? Moreover," and he smiled, "it is possible you would tell me little that I do not know." With hanging head the Master of Gray began:—

"You know I have been Queen Mary's man—well, I have worked for her with all my strength since——"

"Since a certain minister came to Lethington's bed at Leith." Gray started.

"You knew that? Well, I am not ashamed. Yes, I have worked for her this way and that till—" he lowered his voice and bent forward, tapping on Sir Henry's arm—"till Holy Church found a new way to work for God. I—I—Sir, a gentleman after all—I was to go to your Queen's court—not with a dagger like an honest assassin—no, with a poisoned ring!" Sir Henry started back in his chair. "Ay, you shudder, you, their enemy! What was it for me, who was their friend?" He flung himself back, white and haggard. "Well, hear it all! I would not do it—but another, and another will be found—some madman for a martyr's crown; some knave for a bag of gold. Ay, they will find another! Then—then came a question of stealing your papers to know who

were suspect by England. I offered for that—I came —well! I shall write (you may see if you will) that I have failed and you have been warned. Confess, at least, warned you have been!" Sir Henry bowed.

"Ay, sir, warned indeed . . . But you—what of you?"

Gray laughed.

"I? *Dame!* Some night in the lanes by the Louvre—a coping falls. Some morning one more body is caught against the Pont Neuf piers. I? Oh, it will be very simple . . . Very simple!"

And Sir Henry fingering his beard still watched him.

"You said, 'help me to the right cause'—what does that mean?"

"Sir, if you do not know, I can tell you no more."

"I would bid you go to Scotland, back to your own land—but why should you heed me?" His glance was very keen.

"Why?" Gray muttered. "God knows—God knows why I came to you—but I have come," and there was silence for a while.

"Ay!" said Sir Henry, and paused a moment. "Then go to Scotland; there is work enough there for honest men. You may have letters for Arran——"

"Arran?" Gray laughed. "You trust Arran?"

"What?" cried Sir Henry. Gray nodded. "God help us!" Sir Henry muttered. "Well, then, there is work all the more! To the Secretary," and he looked sharply at Gray.

"To the Secretary, sir," said Gray. "And indeed I thank you——"

"It would seem that I also should thank you."

"Me? And for what? Because I tell you I have been a common honest man? Even that I cannot prove you. So! This at least, however——" He drew a sheet of paper to him and wrote hurriedly—

"MY FATHERS,

"Of the papers of Sir H. C. I have seen nothing and shall see nothing. No other will succeed. I take my farewell.

"GRAY."

"See now—in the Rue Boucher, next door but one to a *patisserie*, is a house without a sign. You will send a servant there, he will knock at the door four times (so we keep ourselves safe!), he will be admitted, and he will go to the top of the stairs. There fronting him he will find a door, he will knock on it once —some one from within will knock twice—he will say '*In nomine patris*,' and from within——"

"'*Et filii*' they will answer," said Sir Henry smiling.

"What! You knew?"

"Since some weeks. This letter—I will send it if you choose—I will trust you to tell the priests what you will." Gray bowed and began to smile.

"*Dame!* but it was not merely to show my good faith—indeed, I am not too eager to come near Father Edmund——" He stopped suddenly.

"Father Edmund?"

"Oh, by your leave—I will name none."

"Your pardon. Well, I will send the letter—and again I thank you heartily. Come to me, and I will give you letters to John Maitland." He held out his hand and Gray grasped it. "You have found the right cause now—be true!" and he wrung Gray's hand, looking close into the big dark eyes.

"God help me!" Gray muttered, and again as he turned from Cobham his eyes fell on the calm pale face that looked down from the wall—on the grey eyes that had seen all that night's work—"God help me!"

He hurried away.

A little while Sir Henry Cobham sat in thought, then he rose and passed to the inner room. From the iron-bound coffer he took a paper, and to it he added a little note that Father Edmund Hay was a man to be feared, that the Earl of Arran must be held suspect.

"Well, sir, and so you have let him go?" cried the swordsman, breaking in.

"I have let him go, Frank—the more easily, that I could do nothing else."

"A scoundrel spy!" Sir Henry lay back in his chair.

"Is the riddle so easy to rede? Are you sure he can rede it himself?"

## CHAPTER V.

### THE CHURCH MILITANT.

LOGAN of Restalrig rejoiced in the consciousness of rectitude and the wine of Champagne. Despite their charms, he looked often at the clock, and at last from the clock he looked at his sword and his boots and sighed. He wondered if it was indeed necessary to go and look for the Master of Gray. And at that very moment the door to the street was slammed, the door of the room flung open, and the Master of Gray broke in.

"Ha! Papegot! Was the game well played?"

Wan and dishevelled, Gray snatched at the wine. His hand shook as he filled a cup.

"Ay . . . well played," he muttered, "well played!" and he drank the wine at a draught, and fell into a chair.

"Well, it has taken time. Why? What? What in hell is this?" Logan cried, as the torn clothes fell asunder, and he saw the bare chest, and the line of blood. Gray drank another cup of wine and some colour came back to his cheeks.

"Sir Henry was a little difficult," he said.

"Patrick! Oh, Patrick, to be wounded by Methuselah!"

Gray drank another cup of wine, and now he began to smile.

"Not at all, my dear Logan, to be saved by Methuselah!"

Logan scratched his head.

"Sir Henry was a little difficult—to convince of my good faith." Logan laughed. "But I was pained. And so—" He made the gesture of a man stabbing himself. Logan bent forward and looked at the wound and grunted.

"You seem to have gone nearer than you meant!"

"On the contrary—I did not go as near."

Logan stared, and his jaw fell. Gray nodded.

"Yes—if he had not stopped me." He sipped his wine. "For reasons—Logan, our game is played—and lost. I saw his papers. *Actum est.* They will win. They know everything—or almost. So—if he had not stopped me——" He put out his hand. "It would have been much the same." He sipped his wine and smiled. "Moreover, I knew he would."

"Ha! that sounds better," cried Logan, and laughed. "So he trusts you, does he?"

"Who knows? He will!"

"And they will win, will they?"

"Every trick!"

"So we turn our coats, do we?"

"My dear Logan! we perceive in good time the folly of our youth." And Logan, laughing, caught his arm up and looked at the long rent of Frank's rapier.

"Why, were you killing yourself in two places?"

"No; I had just returned our friend's papers with due care when they ran in and found me in the

cabinet. An ingenuous youth said (remind me to remember) that I was a spy. Well! I was unfortunately in the shadow."

"Yes, you; but your sword?"

"Recognised, as I did, the justice of his conclusion and let him alone." Gray laughed. "He was not, I fear, the best of swordsmen, that youth." Logan gasped.

"Curse me, but you played close!" he muttered. "Well?"

"Well, one should always be in two places at once. You see, if I had been at M. de Mauvissière's, mademoiselle would not have been tired, they would not have come back so soon, I should not buy a new coat. Observe the inferior organisation of the world." He curled his moustache and smiled.

"Oh, mademoiselle would not have been tired?"

"I blush, Logan, I blush."

"Humph! and so we turn our coats for mademoiselle's beautiful eyes?" Gray laughed, and shrugged his shoulders.

"My dear Logan, do you take me for Bayard?"

"The fact is," said Logan, "the fool Bayard would not turn his coat, no more than his tail. You do not happen to be Bayard, Patrick—neither you nor I. But there appears to be a great deal of mademoiselle." Gray tapped on his arm and drew closer.

"Mademoiselle here, mademoiselle there—and I do not say no, Logan—there is a great deal more of Walsingham. Listen!" He repeated what he had read in the despatches, so far as it touched their

fortunes, and Logan grew grave as he heard. "And so, Logan, I wrote my adieux to our holy fathers, and left it for Methuselah to send them—but decidedly one should be in two places at once! Oh, to see Father Edmund's face when he reads!" Logan chuckled and continued to chuckle. "*Mordieu*, then, will you say I am wrong? They spy on me—Biran sends me his little gifts—and yet they would use us on their babes' plots that Walsingham knows before they are made. Am I to fawn on fools that hate me?"

"Patrick, what a lovely phrase!" cried Logan. "And did you write that to Father Edmund?" he chuckled. "I am thinking we shall have amusement very soon!"

"The dear Biran! What joy for Biran!"

"Humph! Patrick, I am thinking the night air will be unhealthy."

"In Paris—but not in Edinburgh."

"Eh? We go to Scotland? Back to Scotland? Death and the devil! My coat is turned!" They shook hands over the wine.

Réveillez-vous, gens qui dormez,
Priez Dieu pour les trépassés!

The chant of the watch sounded below. Logan laughed, and clapped Gray on the shoulder.

"Sleep, you that wake and pray for Queen Mary, the dead! Good-night, Papegot!"

But Logan would have been much amazed if he had seen the Master of Gray kneeling beside his bed and heard him muttering strange prayers. No one

of them was for Mary, the Queen whose happy girl's face smiled from the wall, the Queen who lay pale and worn in the castle at Tutbury while the taper flickered beside her worn book of Hours. Chiefly he prayed for the Master of Gray and for a girl in Paris who slept dreaming of the shame in his eyes and his cry for death.

It was in the midst of these prayers that Logan opened his door and shouted :—

"Ho! Papegot! Did you tell mademoiselle of *la patissière?*" and his laughter rang out. But Gray knelt long.

Now in the afternoon of the next day there came a letter—a letter which, as the messenger, a Breton, swore in bad French, had come from Sir Henry Cobham. When he had sworn sufficiently, Logan waved him away.

"Hugh, see the gentleman safe home!" he said, and Hugh Brown, a raw-boned Scotsman, linked his arm in the Breton's and marched him off.

Gray looked at Logan and looked at the letter. It was sealed with a plain seal. It said only :—

"SIR,

"May I see you at nine this night?

"H. C."

"After dark!" growled Logan. "You know the writing?"

"No—but I remember the ring."

"Ay; would they play the same trick twice though?"

Gray laughed.

"They have few to spare, our poor fathers!" Logan nodded.

"You will not go then?"

"Oh, my dear Logan—on the contrary—I shall go to one place or the other."

"You go to hell then."

"All in good time. I go. If nothing happens, I go to Sir Henry; if something does happen, I go to Holy Church."

"*Ventre du Pape*——"

"Oh, rest it!" He smiled and tapped Logan's arm. "In the joy of new friendships, Logan, let us not forget the uses of the old!" Logan gaped. "The uses of the old," Gray repeated slowly, and he laughed.

"Then I go too," said Logan. "I take pistols!"

"Poor Biran!"

Soon Hugh came running breathless to say that the Breton was indeed one of Cobham's servants. Gray looked at Logan.

"That must have cost a good crown," said he. "Well, come to dinner."

So after dark, ere the moon was up, Logan went to the door and looked out and saw nothing. Shoulder to shoulder the two strode out, but before they came to the end of the street:—

"Followed!" Logan muttered. Gray nodded, and they shortened step. The man behind them began to run, and as he passed Gray heard him mutter:—

"*Gare la ruelle!*"

"Griffiths!" said Gray in Logan's ear, and they saw him vanish in an alley on the right. Logan

chuckled and began to walk noisily, stepping in front of Gray. On they went to the very mouth of the alley, and then Logan stopped suddenly still. They heard in the silence the whirr of a wheel lock checked. A masked face peered round the corner, and Logan hit from the shoulder. The head went swiftly back into the gloom of the alley, thudding against the farther wall, and the pistol clattered on the stones.

"Dead?" said Gray. Logan shrugged his shoulders.

"He will find out. Who was it?"

"Father Edmund."

"Well, there are plenty of priests. Besides, I did not hit straight—that damned wall," and he showed his glove torn all along the side. "Why, fiends of hell!" and he plucked at a pistol, for a man had sprung at Gray from out of a doorway. But Gray had the dagger hand safe.

"Why, Biran? *Encore*, M. de Biran? Go—to your own place!" With all his strength he flung Biran down in the filth of the kennel, and sprang back from the splash. "Stunned, Biran? Good!" He turned away and took Logan's arm.

"Why—will you leave him again?" cried Logan. Gray shrugged his shoulders.

"Poor Biran! So thin a skull—so little in it. A true child of the Church. I adore Biran—as an enemy. Well, it appears we are to see the Church Militant. *En route*, my dear Logan, it should be almost interesting!"

"Why, will you go now?"

"Oh, Logan, now more than ever." And he laughed aloud.

## CHAPTER VI.

### A FATHER OF THE CHURCH.

IN the upper room by the *patisserie* a father of the Church conferred with his children. The Archbishop of Glasgow lowered the letter he held, his plump brow fell over his eyes, and he stared at Father Gaspar Holt.

"And why such haste then?" he said softly.

"Judas, my lord, Judas——" The Archbishop, looking weary, waved his hand.

"Burst," he said gently. "Burst, and why may not the Master of Gray have his chance also?"

"Father Edmund, my lord," cried Father Gaspar.

"And Philippe de Biran, my lord," cried Father William.

"Burning with holy zeal——"

"In Queen Mary's cause——"

"Your antiphonies, your antiphonies," groaned the Archbishop. He rose, gathered his skirts and began to pace up and down, while Father Gaspar and Father William looked at each other and drew together like little dogs in disgrace.

Then a knock came at the door. The Archbishop paused. Father William went to knock twice on the panels.

"*In nomine patris*," said a voice without. Father William grew pale and turned to the Archbishop.

"My lord—my lord—" he stammered. The Archbishop folded his hands.

"It is probably not a ghost, William," said he.

"N—no, my lord," Father William in sorrow agreed. "*Et filii*," he muttered, and opened the door and slunk behind it.

The Master of Gray magnificent on the threshold swept a bow.

"My lord, what condescension!" he cried. The Archbishop stretched out a hand in benediction, and the Master fell an instant on one knee and rose again. Logan stalked stolid into the room and slammed his pistols down on the table. The priests were agitated, and the Master laughed.

"'For a testimony unto them,' my lord," he said, and pointed to the pistols. "Why, where is my dear Father Edmund?" He affected surprise.

"Why do you ask?" said the Archbishop quietly, while the priests gasped.

"Because, my lord, I hope he is in heaven; but I fear he is in hell. Good, my lord, is it by your device that I am given a Borgia ring one day, waylaid with pistol and poniard the next?"

"Your life is ill-ordered, Patrick," said the Archbishop. "Some husband wronged, or lover——"

"Yes, and Father Edmund, is he husband or lover?" The Archbishop looked displeasure. "Ah, but why does Father Edmund walk abroad with a pistol ready for me?"

"Impossible!"

"Well, and that dear Biran—ah, he is husband or

lover, perhaps, and that explains it all! All? No! Father Edmund's pistol—that cries for more. My lord, please you to explain Father Edmund's pistol."

"You are mad, Patrick——"

"Indeed? And what is Father Edmund?"

"What! Do you tell me a priest shot at you?"

"No—he tried."

"Incredible!"

"But—aha!" There was a knock at the door. Gray sprang to it. The little play was played. "Aha! Father Edmund! Mask, pistol, broken head, and all! Incredible! And Biran! Oh, Biran—where have you been? Phew! Biran, what a pleasant evening we are having, and oh—phew!—Logan, open the windows! How you do smell! Incredibly, Biran, as my lord was saying, incredibly you smell!" And the Archbishop, looking at Biran's filth, and the priest's broken head, and the utter amazement of the pair, broke out in soft-voiced laughter. "Impossible! Incredible! Inexplicable! Where did you break your head, and where did you get that smell?"

"Explain," said the Archbishop.

"Explain?" cried Biran. "Let him explain! Let him explain why he played me false at the Louvre—why——"

"Oh, the Louvre! My dear Biran—Lady Kinaldie did not want you—nor did I. Fact one. You insulted a lady. Fact two. Whom I desire to—use. Fact three. So you send me a poisoned ring. *Dame!* Continue to explain!"

"Explain your letter, Gray," cried Father Edmund, "and tell us why, when we sent you a note from the Englishman, you were going to him."

"Your note? Oh, my dear father, and did you think I was going to the Englishman? How then am I here so soon? Faith, I know he has little cause to write to me, so I came (was it not remarkable?)—I came here, of all places, to discover why he did. Well, I discover. We see by degrees. My letter, then. I went to the Englishman—having learnt from his daughter (our dear Biran's flame) that he would be out—I went to examine his papers. That, you remember, I promised. Well, he returned, by a chance, malodorous as Biran, while I was at work. It became necessary to convince him that I had found nothing. Hence the letter—I wrote it there. If you remember, one of his servants brought it. And now, my dear father, I wait with eagerness to hear why you run your head against a wall."

"Because we do not trust you," growled Father Edmund.

"My marvellous mind had divined that. And you, my lord, do I argue that all these little gifts—rings and daggers and pistol shots—come from you?"

The Archbishop walked up and down.

"They do then? It appears, Logan, that Holy Church slams the door of the fold. We are outside. *En route*, Logan!" and he bowed and turned away.

"To the other?" the Archbishop cried.

"Well, and if it were? Once, twice, three times, my poor life is target. A poor thing, but mine own,

and, faith, I tell you I have no ambition to lose it." Father Edmund sprang up pistol in hand. Logan, wheeling, trod on his toes, and the Archbishop, staying wrath with a plump hand, cried to Gray:—

"Will you leave us then?"

"*Pardieu*, no! You leave me!" The Archbishop approached and laid a hand on his shoulder.

"I have not said so. Patrick, who can answer for all fools' folly?"

"Oh, my lord, consider the feelings of Biran!"

"Monsieur has been hasty. Now, my son"—he drew two chairs together and they sat. Gray was smiling. "You went to Cobham's lodging. Perhaps you——?" Gray smiled more broadly. "Ah. Well, you had some scheme of going to England to try the castle at Tutbury. Doubtless you would still go to England?"

"I would rather not," said Gray.

"Why?" and each sought in the other's eyes his purpose.

"Because there is no hope, my lord—none in the world. They have the Queen too fast."

"Ah, what did I tell you?" cried Biran.

"Marvellous, Biran! The truth!"

"Then you learnt nothing?"

"A little. I learnt—that Lethington has left a brother."

"The Secretary?"

"Precisely. The Secretary."

"And Arran?" Gray shook his head.

"The Earl of Arran is—ingenious."

"But the Secretary, you think——" Gray nodded.

"Beyond doubt, I think——"

"Would you go to Scotland?" Gray spread out his hands.

"As you will."

"Then this happens *à merveille!* You will go to Scotland then—and you will be an escort for Lady Kinaldie——"

"Lady Kinaldie!" cried Biran. They both turned and stared at him. Gray laughed.

"Who goes," said the Archbishop blandly, "to make us friends at Court."

"She accomplishes many friendships—does she not, Biran?"

"You will go then?"

"At once, but—" he paused—"there is an insignificant difficulty." He held up a lean purse. "Moreover, it is again insignificant—but the Secretary may be needy, like me, or greedy, like Arran, or by a happy chance both. And then—it is insignificant thrice over—but if I am to be clubbed by Father Edmund, I had as soon lie under the Pont Neuf as in the Nor' Loch." The Archbishop smiled genially and patted his shoulder.

"Patrick, who dreams of such work? Private quarrels have wrought over much ill to the cause of the Church." He shook his head gravely at monsieur. "My boy, howsoever far I might hate you—I whose son in the spirit you have been, you will be ever—even so I should hold you too clever to lose . . . and for lean purses, why five thousand rouleaux are not too little to——"

"Recall to heretics the sins of schism, my lord. No."

"Good, then!" The Archbishop became jovial. "They shall reach you, and you shall hear from me, Patrick, in the morning. You will go to the Secretary —the Secretary and Arran." Patrick knelt devoutly and pulled Logan on to his knees. The Archbishop blessed the pair.

Their feet rang on the stones without, while the Archbishop smiled on his wondering flock in the pride of success.

"Edmund, Edmund, why must you be so mad?" he said. "Much harm you had wrought for us. We need him sorely. And now he may well be true. Now with Marie Kinaldie——"

"Oh, my lord," cried Biran, catching his hand, "my lord, order it some other way. I—I have been faithful many a year—I would die for the Church, my lord, and I have never asked aught but this. Oh, my lord, do not give her to Gray!"

"Faith, here is frenzy! My good M. de Biran, I am not the lady!"

"But Gray will take her," cried Biran, "Gray will have her, and I want her, my lord! I——"

"Monsieur"—the Archbishop rose magnificent—"you forget yourself, and me. Already your passions have worked harm. To our cause no base desires must approach. Be warned, my son. Enough. I have to speak with Father Edmund."

"But my lord——"

"Monsieur!" Monsieur fell on his knees. After

a moment the Archbishop blessed him, and thereafter he went out, dirty and disconsolate.

"Edmund, why do you take up the love feud of such a thing as that?" Father Edmund hung his head. "The Master of Gray is worth to us a hundred of such feather-brains."

"But who has ever trusted him, my lord?" growled the priest.

"Trust? Trust, ah, that is different," said the Archbishop. "We work with what tools God gives. And at the last there is always——" He spoke quickly of other matters.

And the while the Master of Gray, swinging along arm in arm with Logan, said:—

"'Go to Scotland,' says Henry Cobham. 'Go to Scotland,' says John Bethune. It happens, Logan, as my lord said, *à merveille*, oh, *à merveille*."

## CHAPTER VII.

### *AYMEZ LOYAULTÉ.*

THE Master of Gray swore frankly and with feeling, while Logan supplied an occasional chorus. The Archbishop had sent him the value of 5,000 rouleaux in silver plate, and the Master of Gray compared himself to Noah carrying the Ark. Also the Archbishop had sent him instructions, and the Master of Gray considered that they were like eternity. With labour he discovered and announced to Logan that they would meet Lady Kinaldie at the hostelry of the Poisson Vert outside Amiens.

"Ah!" said Gray, and looked up. "Madame having no doubt gone on a visit to her dear cousins d'Aumale and Mayenne. Oh, my reverend father in God, why not tell me so at once?"

"The fact is," said Logan solemnly, "they like to live in a fog." Gray chuckled.

"They shall! And accordingly I will go see Sir Henry!"

He went to his bedroom, and in serious thought he looked at his clothes. Black, it appeared to him, was the only wear, but since he was going on a twofold errand he chose black velvet, embroidered with gold. Shifting his shoulders he smiled at himself in the mirror—settled his sword belt,

touched his black curls. The Master of Gray was satisfied.

He turned away, and again he saw Queen Mary's picture, and the gilt legend at the foot—"*Pour loyaulté*"—and he smiled and went out.

In a crowd in the Rue de Bac a voice whispered from behind:—

"I am following, my lord." Gray did not turn, and he answered in English:—

"Follow me to the Louvre—whither I am not going, Griffiths." And he dropped a ring on the ground. Walking on while a faint frown lay on his brow he remarked to himself that Holy Church was tiresome, and with that conviction dominant he came to the Rue de Ste. Geneviève. With pleasure now he heard that Sir Henry Cobham was within.

"Sir, I have come to claim your promise!"

A flash of the white plume, as he bared his head and bowed. Then he stood tall and lithe, gloved hand on his rapier hilt. The blood glowed in his cheeks, and his dark eyes flashed. And Sir Henry Cobham smiled.

He pointed to a chair, and the Master of Gray sat down and drew off his right glove, while Sir Henry reflected and caressed his beard.

"So you go to Scotland?" Gray looked up, with laughter in his eyes.

"*Mordieu!* sir, yes! As you bade me——"

"Did I?" A mask had fallen over the smiling face. Glittering blue eyes looked into black.

"Yes, sir," said Gray, meeting him. But in a moment

he began to laugh again. "*Dame!* Not that my leave is hard to take. Mother Paris speeds the parting guest—with bullets and poniards."

"Already?"

"Last night." Sir Henry fingered his beard again.

"And yet that—that does not make you go." Gray laughed.

"Faith, sir, 'tis not without influence."

"When do you go then?" said Sir Henry sharply.

"If you will give me your letter—to-morrow."

"You are quick to go, and—" Sir Henry tapped his arm—"and it is not because you fear murderers."

"Fear? No, perhaps—for they are fools. But indeed they spoil my temper. Well, you do not know why I am anxious so suddenly to be gone so soon. Can you guess then how I long to be quit of these baby games—these plots that do nothing—these secrets that mean less—to do something at last—something!" And then Sir Henry bowed gravely.

"Ay, I can guess," he said. "If you will wait a while, I will bring you a letter to the Secretary."

So Sir Henry went away to his own room, and there he found Frank writing.

"You were wrong, Frank," he said quietly. Frank looked up. "The Master of Gray has come back," and he sat down to write.

"Then what is his game?" Frank muttered.

Sir Henry looked at him a moment but did not speak, and Frank bit his pen and frowned.

Away in the other room the Master of Gray was

bowing over a slim white hand, while a low voice said to him :—

"I am glad that you have come."

He found her grey eyes looking frankly into his, and he held her hand a moment, till a little smile began to play about her lips.

"Did you doubt?" And still they looked at each other.

"No," she answered. He bowed gravely.

"And I—may I tell you I am glad that I see you again? For to-morrow I go."

"To Scotland?" she asked anxiously.

"Yes. Back to—the North Star." Their eyes met, and she flushed faintly. "Back to Scotland—" his voice fell—"to work—at last."

"I am glad," she said softly. "And you——?"

His eyes seemed to grow darker.

"Do you think I have loved this life?" he said. "In darkness—in the mist. Yes, it is like that. In the mist when you grope and stumble and know you are going a false path, and yet there is none can show you the right. Then—then comes God's wind from the sea, and the mist is swept before it like a great grey wave, and you see the country, and the way is clear in the light."

"And—and the way is clear?"

"Ay . . ." and then he laughed a little. "I am talking like a little poet. You see, I know how thick the mist, how far there is to go before——" He stopped suddenly and turned away. "I know what I am." The hand on his sword belt clenched tight. Behind him he heard the low voice.

"But now you have found the work—and the cause," she said. "And now——" She too fell silent.

"Now—I will keep faith," he said, as if she had asked his word. She came beside him, and they stood together, her russet hair close to his dark curls. She was as tall as he. And he asked for nothing, but she held out her hand. The Master of Gray fell on his knee and kissed it, and he looked up and saw the blood dark in her cheeks, but her eyes did not falter. "And I go to the proof."

"Yes," and her eyes shone proud and confident. "You will go——" He saw she was looking at the picture by the window, the picture of her own grey eyes and russet hair. Her lip trembled, and he saw it and said quickly:—

"Why, what are these words? *Aymez loyaulté.*"

"Yes. That was my mother's motto."

"*Aymez loyaulté,*" he repeated, and from the picture he turned to her. "Yes, I go, and some day—some day I will tell you—some day under the North Star." Her hand pressed his and her breast trembled. She tried to speak. Again he knelt and kissed the hand while it clung to his.

Then the door opened, and in came Frank. Gray sprang up and bowed slightly. Frank flushed and muttered an angry greeting. May hurried by him, and Gray springing to the door had Frank stumble against him. He drew back, and Frank went out after the girl.

While Gray stood looking at the picture Sir Henry Cobham came in. The letter he gave to Gray.

"I think it may serve you, sir. There is no lack of work, and sore lack of true men in Scotland." He paused and held out his hand. "And, indeed, I wish you well."

"I shall hope to prove that one is found," said Gray. "It is idle to thank you." So with a grip of the hand they parted, and Gray went back to find Logan standing amid a dishevelled room.

"Ah! Patrick! Ex-papegot! Hugh is pining to know whether this goes with us." He held up the picture of their Queen Mary. Gray turned away. "*Pour loyaulté*, Patrick, *pour loyaulté!* What? Shall we put it in—for loyalty?"

Gray swore at him.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### HOW M. LE DUC DE GUISE BROKE ONE CHAIR AND SOME HEADS.

THE Master of Gray, Logan of Restalrig, Robert Ogilvy, surveyed the beauties of nature. A dark meadow, a winding river, a row of poplars—these were the ingredients of the landscape. Logan commented upon them with freedom, and his two companions lent a little unnecessary aid.

"The fact is," said Logan breathless, "you are inadequate, damnably inadequate, Patrick. Ogilvy, you have no imagination. *Quicunque vult*—whosoever would be damned, let him come to me. . . . Look at that obnoxious stream. I went to bathe in that infernal stream, Patrick, and, fiend take it! it was like swimming in soup. I am become like a hog in a bog, and you, Patrick, are an owl in the desert. Bah! . . ." He made some other statements.

They were sitting in the gallery that ran round the courtyard of the Poisson Vert where for two gloomy steaming days they had waited for Lady Kinaldie. In the midst of Logan's declamation a little troop came clattering up to the inn, and Gray, looking at them, held up his finger suddenly before Logan's open mouth, and silently moved into the

gloom of a corridor. Logan, for all his huge bulk and his jingling spurs, was with him as silently, but Ogilvy knocked over a chair so that the riders looked up as he vanished, and Logan murmured greeting in his ear.

"Verdun!" Gray whispered, catching Logan's arm. The leader, Verdun, spoke for a while with the landlord, who appeared obsequious, and then he and his men vanished within.

"Ho, ho!" said Logan, and looked at Gray. "M. de Verdun—you annoy me."

"'How beautiful are thy feet upon the mountains'—and oh, M. le duc d'Aumale—such big feet. And what can we do for M. d'Aumale at the Poisson Vert?"

"The fact is," said Logan, "it is an insult. We wait, here in the Guise's country, till they make ready to catch us. And then—then they have the damnable impudence to bring no more than four men. Patrick, I shall become angry."

"But why does M. d'Aumale obtrude himself?" Logan laughed.

"On a cursed faithful servant of the Church. Too bad, Patrick, too bad!"

The Master of Gray frowned.

"Three drink. One watches. For whom, Logan? For us? No. Mine host would know we are here. For Lady Kinaldie? No. Where she is, none knows better than d'Aumale. Again no. I think we are only chorus to this play. But who is the protagonist? I do not understand."

Logan buckled his belt.

The sun was setting behind the poplars, and the river shone red. Far off along the white road was a blur of dust that came nearer and grew darker and gave out the clatter of hoofs and steel.

The man on watch shaded his eyes to look.

Two riders there were, travelling fast, and Logan watching muttered:—

"English!" But Gray, with a whispered oath, hurried away down the corridor.

The man on watch waited a moment longer, and ran in to his fellows.

Then, and the riders were almost at the door, Logan saw the Master of Gray lounging towards them. He saw one rein up sharply and stare, but he did not hear why.

"If you are wise, sir, you will not halt," said Gray quietly.

"What? Why?" cried the rider. It was Frank Somers. And Gray, walking lazily on, answered without turning his head:—

"Have you heard of the Holy League?" A moment Frank looked after him, and then, with a short laugh, he rode on up to the door of the Poisson Vert, for he saw shame in heeding the Master of Gray.

Again the landlord was obsequious, as Gray, his evening walk suddenly done, remarked with a little cynical smile. He foresaw education for Master Frank Somers, and he went back to Logan on the watch.

"Who is it?" Logan whispered.

"I fear it is fool—pure fool," said the Master of Gray.

"Why does he come here?"

"To learn—ah, listen! His lesson begins!"

For the common room of the inn rang with voices and cries that appealed to the Christian faith, but little to hope and charity. And in a moment above the dull medley of noise rose the sharp rattle of steel, and then the ominous cry deep voiced.

"*Guise! Guise! Tuez!*"

Logan laughed, but the Master of Gray felt the blood tingle in his cheeks.

"*Mordieu!* Logan, we are not chorus—we are gods—gods *ex machina*—forward!" and he vaulted from the gallery to the ground. Logan, cursing him for a fool, came thudding after.

They found Frank Somers and his servant fighting from behind a little table with the four of M. de Verdun, silent and white, against the cursing, shouting bullies.

"The fact is," said Logan, watching their clumsy sword-play, "this will be quite brief." But Gray caught Verdun's sword-arm as he lunged.

"M. de Verdun," he said sweetly. Verdun looked in his face.

"You? Curse you!" he cried, and tried to jerk himself away. Gray held.

"Oh, M. de Verdun," said Gray, "you make a noise. Do not make a noise, M. de Verdun"—he made himself inconvenient to another of Verdun's party—"you incommode M. de Logan, who is weak."

"Damnably," said M. de Logan. He picked up a wooden chair.

"Go to the devil!" cried Verdun, and again he tried to free himself.

"Ha! M. de Verdun, now you incommode me——" As he flung Verdun backwards he drew his sword and dashed in.

Logan put a hand on a man's shoulder and caused him to turn round.

"Monsieur, do me the honour to contemplate that chair," he said politely. With an oath the man made a pass at him, but Logan's hand fell in an instant from shoulder to wrist and the grip tightened and the rapier fell clattering on the floor. "Pray, contemplate that chair," roared Logan loud above the clash of steel. "A cursed good chair! Sit in it!" With his left hand the man drew his dagger, and Logan sprang back whirling the chair aloft.

"*Prends!*" he cried, and the chair came crashing down, and the man's knees bent and his back, and he fell in a heap.

Round in the air the chair went whistling, driven by the full back swing of Logan's arm, and hither and thither went Verdun's bravos, reeling like drunken men. The two Englishmen leant against the wall panting, amazed. High above all towered the giant form and the whirling arms. Deep laughter rang as the bloody chair struck this way and that. There was a wild light in Logan's eyes as he tossed back his dark hair and drove his blows down and home. Amid

the crash and the thud sounded the sharp rattle of Gray's sword as he fought Verdun—Verdun spared alone of them all. Logan chuckled, and held his chair aloft like a poised thunderbolt.

"Monsieur de Verdun!" Gray sprang in and touched him on the breast. "I am reluctant to kill you. Your men are down. Do me the kindness to (oh, monsieur, so old a trick!)—to retire. You perceive"—he sprang out of line as Verdun attacked, and touched him again above the heart—"it is quite hopeless, and"—he sprang back dropping his point—"you are free to go."

"*Mort de diable!* Never!" cried Verdun, and ran in. Gray beat his point out of line and sprang again to the side.

"Go!" he cried. Verdun came at him again.

"Then stay!" said Logan, and dropped the chair on his head.

"A pity," said Gray, sheathing his sword. He turned to Frank and bowed. "Well, sir, and perhaps you have heard of the Holy League now?"

"What does it mean?"

"You should know best. What do you carry?"

"What is that to you?"

"Oh, nothing to me, of course, nothing to me, Mr. Somers. But it seems to have been a great deal to our poor Verdun. Verdun, who is a captain of M. d'Aumale. Or—was."

"And what do you do here?"

"Hold the door! Oh, 'tis only Hugh. What do

I do here? Why, Mr. Somers, you have been so frank——"

"There is a troop coming, Patrick," said Logan, who had been talking to Hugh. "From Amiens."

"What? More leaguers!" He twisted his moustache a moment, and then, "I give you good-day, Mr. Somers. *En avant!* Keep the left bank of the Somme, keep off Abbeville as you would the leprosy. And I think, Mr. Somers, I think, if I were you, I would travel all night."

"These are leaguers?" said Frank, frowning and puzzled.

"Beyond doubt."

"Then what will you do?"

"I shall do it. For God's sake, go. Take the two horses at the farther end of the stable." Then as Frank hesitated and eyed him with eloquent distrust, "*Cordieu*, will you have us all hang together? Go, man, go!" They heard the horses now, and Gray half dragged him to the door. "Mr. Somers—you saved my life *malgré moi*—let me save yours *malgré vous*. See!" He pointed to the coming troop. "Would you have your papers go to the Guise?"

"But you——?" cried poor puzzled Frank.

"I—shall assuredly be hanged—if you stay!"

And at that Frank went, still striving to rede the riddle of the Master of Gray.

Gray turned an instant to watch the cavalcade, and was grateful that it came slowly. Just as he was back at the door again the innkeeper, discreetly absent while M. de Verdun did his work, ran up breathless.

"M. de Verdun . . . ?" he cried. "Oh, gentlemen, gentlemen . . . I thought——" He flung up his hands and staggered back into Gray's arms. Gray propelled him gently forward.

"Beyond doubt you thought. I, also, my friend, I thought. I thought that the Poisson Vert was an honest inn—not a place for bullies, my friend, footpads, my friend, brigands, my friend!" His grip tightened on the landlord's fat arm.

"Oh, monsieur, monsieur—and you have broken the chair!" wailed the landlord.

"Devil a bit!" said Logan cheerfully, and laid hold of him. "The fact is, my beautiful friend, these gentlemen broke your chair." He indicated Verdun's men.

"These gentlemen, monsieur?"

"Who attacked, my friend, M. d'Ogilvy," said Gray. There was a noise in the stable.

"In a most bloodthirsty manner," said Ogilvy.

"Oh, my God!" sobbed the landlord; "and now they are dead."

"Of course," said Ogilvy truculently.

"My God, my God! and M. de Guise—oh, gentlemen, gentlemen!" There was more noise in the stable.

"The fact is," said Logan cheerfully, "they should have had stronger heads—but then they might have broken your table."

"But M. de Guise—oh, gentlemen!"

"*Vive M. de Guise!*" cried Gray. He heard the noise of the cavalcade in the courtyard. "What then?"

"He sent them to——"

"Bully me, *mordieu!*" cried Ogilvy, curling a small moustache. They were dismounting in the courtyard.

"Oh, no, monsieur, to catch the English thieves. Ah, gentlemen, where are the English?"

"English?" said Gray, as a savage might say "Plato?"

"English?" said Ogilvy.

"English?" said Logan.

And under the wondering stare of them all, the landlord struggled vainly to speak.

"You are a little perturbed, my good friend," said Gray.

"The fact is," said Logan solemnly, "you are confused. It was M. de Guise broke that chair." The landlord gaped and gurgled.

"Who speaks of M. de Guise?" It was a new voice. A new figure stood in the doorway, slim and tall, in a cloak of chequered black and white. Gray, who had waited for this, bowed and smiled.

"M. le duc d'Aumale—your very faithful servant."

"Oh—M. de Gray——" And then he saw Verdun's men, lying on the ground strangely and very still. He saw the blood. "*Têtedieu!* monsieur, what is this? Verdun—dead?" Behind him his gentlemen peered anxiously over his shoulder.

"A friend of yours?" said Gray. "So then perhaps you can explain why he attacks mine?"

"Yours?" cried d'Aumale. "What had he to do with you?"

"That, monsieur, is what I wait anxiously to learn.

What, M. d'Aumale, do you look black at me? I am told to wait here—here in the Poisson Vert—and four of your men come and attack my friends. Say then, monsieur, why are my men to be murdered by yours? Is this how Guise keeps faith? *Dame!* 'tis little thanks and less reward I have had from you. If you have aught against me, tell me, not have me stabbed in the back!"

"You? There was no question of you, M. de Gray," cried d'Aumale in amazement. "They were to catch an Englishman with papers for Elizabeth." Gray laughed incredulously.

"They know how to make mistakes, your men," said he.

"*Têtedieu!* I give you my word it is so." Gray bowed.

"Then I believe it," said he generously.

"But, gentlemen, there were English here—rascals!" cried the landlord, shaking his fist at the air.

"Here?" cried Gray. "Then what does this mean, Ogilvy? You said—you came in, and were set upon, you and Hugh."

"Which is precisely the fact."

"Then what of these English?" Ogilvy shrugged his shoulders.

"The fact is," said Logan, "before we arrived Patrick, there were, you remember——" The Master of Gray remembered at once.

"Two fellows just come to the courtyard! True! But that does not explain why they attacked Ogilvy."

"No." And Logan and Gray looked for an explanation to d'Aumale. It was then that inspiration came upon the landlord.

"I see it, gentlemen, I see it! Ah, rascals! M. de Verdun, gentlemen, he left one to watch. The gentlemen ran in and told M. de Verdun the rogues were coming. Then by a fatality these seigneurs came in—oh, gentlemen, a fatality!" He wrung his hands and contemplated the broken chair. "Rascals! Rascals!"

"A fatality!" d'Aumale muttered, biting his lip. "And he, Verdun, he is dead?"

"Oh, yes! he is dead," said Logan. And it was Gray who asked sharply:—

"But what of these English?"

"Ah, devils of English!" groaned the landlord. And then arose from afar the voice of the ostler:—

"Maître Jacques, Maître Jacques!" He ran up to the door with a crowd of d'Aumale's men at his tail. "Oh, Maître Jacques, devils of English! Oh, gentlemen, they have taken your horses—and oh—devils, devils, devils!" He became incoherent. Gray jumped at him, caught his trembling hands and looked close in his eyes.

"Now! Quiet!" The man trembled.

"Y—yes, monseigneur," he muttered.

"Now, what is it?"

"They ran in, monseigneur; they were saddling your horses, and I—they gagged me and tied me to the manger, and they are gone."

"*Ventre du Pape!* On our horses!" It was the

earth-shaking roar of Logan. "Pursue, pursue!" He stumbled over Ogilvy to the door.

"Ay, after them!" cried d'Aumale, and they ran out.

It was Logan, Logan ten-score pounds in the saddle, who took the best horse *vi et armis*. It was Logan who led the pursuit thundering over Amiens bridge and down the right bank of the Somme. Logan who came back after dark on a reeking horse, rear-guard of the pursuit, swearing lustily at all thieves.

These things he recounted to the Master of Gray, who had supped with d'Aumale and Lady Kinaldie and found the lady severe.

"But, Patrick, man, we pay for our laugh," he cried at last. "They were stout beasts!"

"*Dame!* not we. D'Aumale is to make them good!"

"What? Oh, *pour loyaulté, pour loyaulté!*" This time the Master of Gray joined in the laugh.

The pair went gleefully to bed.

## CHAPTER IX.

### *N'OSEREZ-VOUS?*

WHITE cliff to westward, where the sea lay dark in its shadow; a sky blue as deep water and bright with the evening sun; tiny waves chased each other before the gentle south wind. High out of the water, under an ungainly cloud of brown sail, the bark *Godly Meg* ran northward home to Leith.

Forward, Logan amused himself. He, whose play was more strong than polished, fenced with Ogilvy, whose play was more polished than strong. Logan was much amused, and in the lightness of his heart he sang so that they might have heard at the Nore :—

> "If ever I marry, I'll marry a maid,
> To marry a widow I'm sore afraid;
> For maids they are simple and never will grudge,
> But widows full oft, as they say, know too much!"

when Hugh tapped him on the shoulder.

"The Master's good-will, sir—and would you be less melodious!"

"*Ventre du Pape!* Why—oho—tell him I would not make discord for the world and all. But, curse me, Robin, curse me, I thought our lady had well forgot she was widow——" and he nodded to the poop, where Gray sat by Lady Kinaldie. Robin, who made a habit of it, blushed.

Lady Kinaldie sat playing with embroidery, while the breeze set her dark curls trembling. The shadow of the sail fell over her face. At her feet lay the Master of Gray, and they looked away over the sea.

"Good-bye to France," said Gray, and laughed.

"So said Queen Mary," said Lady Kinaldie quickly. Gray looked up lazily: the black eyes met.

"In a different spirit—the poor Mary!" he smiled, "for it was in different company."

"Ah! Had the Master of Gray been at her side she had been more happy."

"He would now be less."

"Is it certain, sir?" said Lady Kinaldie, turning a little towards him, with a smile of mockery.

"For he would be dead—like Châtelard perhaps, or——"

"Châtelard? Châtelard loved her." Gray laughed.

"Love, lady?" He raised himself on his elbow, and a light came in his eyes. "To enjoy and kill her honour? Faith, is that love, in woman or man?"

"Indeed, you are a doctor in love."

"Faith, none less! I asked," and he made a little bow, "I ask one who should know!" She watched a moment the careless, laughing face.

"As one who does not," she said coldly.

"Alas, yes!"

"But—as one—who would learn?" Her voice was low and tender. Gray looked up into her eyes, and she veiled them quickly. She let her hand fall over the arm of the chair: after a moment Gray took it.

In his loose clasp he felt it thrill. "Of me?" she whispered, and slowly the blood rose to her cheeks.

The sun was falling red behind the cliffs. In the failing breeze the sails flapped noisily, and forward the stamping and clatter of swords was loud. She said no more, but she let her hand lie in his, and she trembled a little as she looked away to the sunset.

"Madame is served!" Gray heaved a great sigh. He moved easily on his cushions, easily let go her hand and sprang up. Bowing, he led her to her cabin. Her eyes avoided his.

Then he paced up and down the deck awhile, and at supper with Logan and Ogilvy he was silent. At dice he left them, whereby Logan lessened his small esteem for Ogilvy and gained the year's rental of some good acres in the Carse of Forth.

In the starlight the Master of Gray leant on the bulwarks watching the dark water slip slowly by, and saw again the dark grey eyes of his love. And while he looked and dreamed of her, the music of a lute came clear above the wash of the waves, and he heard a low voice sing:—

"All thy beauties sting my heart!
*N'oserez-vous, mon bel ami?*
I must die, through Cupid's dart!
*Je vous en prie,* pity me!
*N'oserez-vous, mon bel, mon bel?*
*N'oserez-vous, mon bel ami?*"

He bit his lip.

"Wilt thou let thy true love die?
*N'oserez-vous, mon bel ami?*
Adon were unkind, say I!
*Je vous en prie,* pity me!"

And he shrugged his shoulders.

"It becomes necessary," he muttered, while the voice fell langorous:—

*"N'oserez-vous, mon bel, mon bel?*
*N'oserez-vous, mon bel ami?"*

The curtains of the cabin were aglow with light, but when he opened the door the blaze dazzled him. All around stood flashing silver candelabra. The air was heavy with the scent of roses. He caught his breath and faltered. All white she lay on a black velvet couch. Through the gauze glimmered clear her beauty, the round white limbs resting in careless grace. Her bosom rose and fell gently. In the black hair was one red rose. She saw him, and her lips parted, her black eyes glowed like wine in the light. And she laid her lute aside, holding out her bare arms.

"Hast come then—*ami*," she murmured, and still her arms shone in the air, while she laughed low and clear as the lute.

And the man felt the blood in his cheeks and the throb of his pulse. She murmured low:—

*"N'oserez-vous, mon bel, mon bel?*
*N'oserez-vous, mon bel ami?"*

While still her white arms hung in the light.

"Madame, I dare not!"

His face was pale now, as the words rang out sharply. Then her arms fell and she started up.

"You——" she cried. All languor was gone now. It was a woman fierce and wild-eyed, whose lithe limbs were drawn back as if she would spring upon

him, who pointed at him and laughed long and loud. "You! Ah, the Puritan's kisses are hotter! The Puritan's paramour must be faithful and earn his wage!"

"It appears that you are angry," said the Master of Gray.

"Angry?" Again the loud wild laughter. "With you? A cheat—a spy paid——"

"Madame, what are you?" He bent forward, leaning on a chair to look at her, and his eyes were fierce as hers. "Ay, what are you?" he said through his teeth. She grew pale as death and trembled before his eyes, and fell back against the wall. He let his voice ring harsh. "You have come to watch me, madame. Well, watch! . . . Pray, do not make it necessary that I should appear—in this poor part—again." And he bowed and went out.

Logan and Ogilvy were on deck. Logan was the happier. Logan gave greeting in a gentle chuckle.

"Robin," said the Master of Gray, "Robin, you have not been so attentive to Lady Kinaldie as she might desire. Wherefore——"

"What? What?" cried Logan.

"Hereafter you will be." Ogilvy laughed.

"Faith, if you are tired!" he cried. "Shall I go to her now?"

"Curse me, what is that?" cried Logan. His head turned to listen.

"Nothing," said the Master of Gray. "Let us walk." Arm in arm, Gray in the middle, they went forward. For the Master of Gray had heard, and he

knew that Lady Kinaldie was sobbing in her cabin. He seemed to see her writhing on the couch, biting her pale lips till they were stained with blood, and impotent still to make her pain dumb.

"Shall I charm her to-night?" said Ogilvy, and gave an upward turn to his moustache. Gray looked at him and seemed not to see him.

"I think not. To-morrow."

"*À demain!*" cried Ogilvy, and forgot the dice. Logan and Gray saw each other smile.

Soon Logan sent Ogilvy to bed, bidding him sleep for his beauty's sake, and then pacing up and down in the moonlight with Gray, Logan asked:—

"Well, Patrick? What has happened?"

"It appears that she loves me," said Gray. Logan laughed aloud.

"*Ventre du Pape!* I could survive!"

"I wonder if I shall?" said Gray. "For indeed it is very dangerous."

"To be loved?"

"To be honest."

And yet to his sorrow Robin Ogilvy's sleep for beauty was all in vain, for Lady Kinaldie was seen on deck no more till the *Godly Meg* lay safe in Leith Harbour. And then:—

"I suppose I will be getting to Restalrig. Damned old place!" said Logan affectionately, looking vainly eastward over the flat shore. All around, over sea and land, the morning mist hung heavy and chill. "The old land—grey as ever. Patrick, you have an apt name. Will you come to Restalrig?"

The Master of Gray looked and made Logan look at Lady Kinaldie's cabin.

"Curse me! We can be done without by sea! By land——" The ship was hailed from a boat, and the next moment a man was climbing the rope-ladder. He asked curtly for Lady Kinaldie. His back was towards them. By a strange chance, for there was no wind, Gray's hat blew off, and a rush after it found him face to face with Lady Kinaldie's visitor. Gray was fluent in apology and accomplished the lowest of bows. Then the visitor bared his head a moment and hurried after the mate to Lady Kinaldie's cabin.

"Oh, Solomon! By land we can surely be done without," Gray muttered, gripping Logan's arm.

"Who is he?"

"I do not know him; but I beheld his tonsure—and I think, Logan, I think, I will not tarry on the *Godly Meg*."

Logan gave an elaborate oath of assent.

Ogilvy was sent to ask if they could serve the Lady Kinaldie. Lady Kinaldie, by the mouth of her steward, thanked them for a pleasant voyage—whereat Gray smiled—would not give them further pains—Gray looked at Logan, and doubted not that they would meet again in good time—Gray shrugged his shoulders.

"*Aeternum servans sub pectore vulnus*," he muttered.

"*Mort de diable!* You tie your own hands, Patrick. The fact is, Patrick, there is still a great deal of mademoiselle. It will be inconvenient, damnably

inconvenient, the lady's slighted beauty. Well—shall I drown the priest?"

"All in good time. At present—Restalrig."

So they took horse at the Ship Inn and rode away over the links, whilst the mist broke and faded and the Forth began to glitter dark, and the crags of Arthur's Seat rose suddenly into sight beyond rolling meadowland, and they saw the roofs and walls of Edinburgh glow ruddy against the grey hills.

In the deck cabin on the *Godly Meg* the priest was greeting a woman pale and red-eyed.

"I am Stephen Green of the Dominican order. I come at the request of Father Edmund Hay—but I fear the voyage has tried your strength." She waved her hand.

"Yes, my father, you were expected," she said, and she leant her head on her hand and looked at him. He was not beautiful. A prominent brow overhung fallen cheeks and little pale blue eyes shining under red lashes. "And you come to hear of——" She paused.

"Yes," said Father Stephen. Her brow was furrowed.

"You have heard of——"

"Yes," said Father Stephen. "I have heard much." His little eyes glittered.

"Father Edward suspects——"

"Yes," said Father Stephen. "And you, my child, you have heard—more perhaps; you suspect—more perhaps; and perhaps you know so much that——" He stopped abruptly. His thin fingers beat on the

table. He leant towards her. "We shall need to know—no more." Her cheeks were white.

"My God! what does that mean?" she cried. The little blue eyes searched her face. He smiled.

"That, my child, it is not necessary for you to know," he said quietly. "So—you have spoken with him, of course."

"Yes—long."

"You learnt his true heart?"

"Yes—well."

"Ah! My child, you have done a good work for God. Is he false?" A moment she seemed to think.

"No, ah, no! He is true!" Again the little blue eyes were intent upon her.

"Be sure, my child," he said slowly. "Be very sure. It were better that the Church be rid of lukewarm service, than that in weakness she cherish a traitor."

"I am sure!" she cried then quickly. "He is true!"

"Be very sure! A doubt and he is—no more dangerous. A doubt kept hidden—he ruins us all."

"I am sure! I am sure! He is true with his whole heart—to his Queen!" The priest waved his hand.

"And to the Church?"

"Yes," she muttered.

"Be very sure!"—again the cold warning voice—"it were better we run no danger. Let there be no sinful weakness, my child." Then at last she sprang up.

"Do you think I love him?" she cried. "You dream of that? None has cause to hate him as I. I tell you he—he has cast me off. And once—once——"

She was dark with shame. "I hate him!" she cried, stamping her foot. "Am I like to save him?" she laughed. "Do you know us women so little, father—so little? Ah, our Lady, how you have tempted me!" and she fell sobbing on the couch.

Thereat Father Stephen blessed her for a faithful servant of the Church and said that there was balm in Gilead. Whereat she broke out in hysterical laughter, and her French maid ran in and drove him forth.

And Logan of Restalrig, grown merry, drank toasts that day at dinner to the wrongs of slighted beauty, while Lady Marie Kinaldie lay in an inn at Leith, with her beautiful face lined with pain, pressing her throbbing head against the pillows to stifle the sobs that tore at her heart. So she kept in her breast the undying wound.

## CHAPTER X.

### THE MAN IN THE SHADOW.

GOLDEN and crimson and blue the stained light poured down upon the dark oak carving of the hall at Holyrood. A medley of colour shone on the polished floor. Here and there on the walls helm and sword caught by a shaft of light glowed red or glittered cold. By the door, a blotch of gloom in the splendour, stood a man and a woman. A woman wan and grey-haired in the black of widowhood; a man in a black Geneva gown, tall and bent, with a beard that fell to his chest, and eyes blazing from a haggard face. Ever and again the woman bent forward to peer down the gallery and drew back wringing her hands and muttering. The man took no heed.

"Wait!"

The woman started and shrank back trembling; she looked askance at the dark recess over against them. There, dimly seen in the shadow, another man stood with folded arms. He said no more, he made no sign, but drew back into the deeper gloom. For footsteps echoed in the gallery. Quickly they came nearer, while the woman, clasping her hands together, swayed to and fro. Head of a splendid throng, two men came in. One was tall and stately, with bright blue eyes and curling golden hair; a row

of jewels shone on the breast of his coat of blue velvet; he smiled as he strode easily on. The other stooped and shuffled, looked now at the ground, now timidly up at his companion: the bright light revealed him loose-limbed and ungainly, and shone on dirty, worn clothes: his hands twitched, his big head swayed to and fro, his thick lips shook. This was the King.

Before him the woman flung herself down and caught his knees:—

"Mercy, sire, mercy!" she cried. The King staggered and caught at his companion's arm. "Mercy, mercy!" she murmured. The King's shifty eyes wavered from her to his companion:—

"M—my lord——" he stammered, and Arran gave him an oath.

"Back to your kennel!" roared the Earl of Arran, and he kicked the woman away, and she fell prone on the floor. The King shuffled backwards and hid his face in his hands. Arran dragged him forward. "Come, sire," he said with a grim smile.

But in their path stood the dark Geneva gown.

"Justice, my lord King!" cried a voice strong and confident as Arran's. Flashing dark eyes met Arran's fierce gaze fiercely.

"Ha! Godly Master John Craig—Master Craig have a text for next Sabbath, 'Render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's'." Arran laughed in his face, then turned roughly to the King. "Go, sire." The King trembled. "'S death! go!" he thundered, and pushed the King forward—and the King shuffled

hurriedly away. "Now, Master Craig! Get you home to your bible, lest a worse thing happen. Bring your women here again and—" he took a step forward—"perhaps you will not go back." Craig did not move. There were some who followed the King, some that stayed to watch the issue. The woman lay in a swoon. Still in the shadow waited the man with folded arms. In the midst stood Arran and Craig, eye to eye :—

"'Be not deceived: God is not mocked,'" cried Craig. "Men higher than you have been brought low, my Lord of Arran."

"A miracle! Master Craig prophetizes! Ha! you shall be a true prophet!" He flung himself on his knees and grinned up at Craig. "Now am I humbled!"

"Mock as you will, my lord. God will not be mocked. He will make you find it earnest when you are cast down from the horse of your pride." Arran laughed as he rose. "Be advised, my lord! Give back to Lady Gowrie her stolen lands."

"Stolen?" thundered Arran, lifting his hand.

"Stolen," said Craig, drawing closer still.

The man in the shadow came forward one pace silently.

Arran struck the minister a blow that sent him reeling among those that stood by.

"Go home with your woman, fool!" he cried, and as he passed on he lifted his foot to spurn the woman out of his way. But it happened that a man moved suddenly, and it happened that his foot struck against a man's spur, and he flung the man out of his path

with an oath and went limping after the King. The man was the Master of Gray. Away in Arran's train went the courtiers: only two men came to the woman and bent over her. One of them was the Master of Gray.

When all the rest were gone, the man in the shadow came over to Craig, who leant, coughing heavily, against the wall.

"And was I wrong, Master Craig?" said he. The two who tended Lady Gowrie looked up at the sound.

"The cup is full, the cup is full," Craig muttered. "'The wicked shall fall by his own wickedness.' Ay!" He drew himself up; his great eyes blazed. "Ay! Woe unto him, the despoiler of widows' houses! Woe unto him! The dogs shall eat him as the dogs ate Jezebel in the portion of Jezreel!"

"The dogs—may come late," said the other, and he looked curiously into Craig's eyes. But the old man's gaze was set on things far away.

"The doom is said, Sir John—the doom is said!" he murmured dreamily.

"Ay—doom—yes!" Sir John smiled. "But for her, Master Craig?" He tapped Craig's arm, and pointed to Lady Gowrie, struggling painfully to life. The old man's eyes brightened.

"God's Church shall take up her cause. Who better, Sir John—the cause of the fatherless and the widow?" The haggard face grew tender. Sir John touched his moustache.

"Surely, none better," said he. "And none with more zeal, Master Craig," and he bowed slightly.

"Now, who are our Samaritans here? How—the English Envoy? Master Davison, do I see aright? You—you are still the English Envoy, Master Davison? You aid Lady Gowrie? Sir, sir, what will they say in London!"

Davison rose, leaving the Master of Gray to help Lady Gowrie to her feet.

"Mr. Secretary—my Lord Gowrie was of my mistress's friends," he said flushing.

"And had—the reward—that your mistress is wont to give, sir. So. Pray, go to the Earl of Arran, whom your mistress delights to honour. Faith, you see what your friendship brings, and you can speak of it! I make my compliments on your English—courage!"

"I swear, sir, my mistress shall hear of this! And I, if aught I can do, Sir John—" he caught Sir John's arm—"I give my word——"

"No, sir. We have had words enough in Scotland. Nay, sir, I mean nothing to your dishonour—your will is good, I doubt not. But would you bid me trust those above you?"

Davison hung his head.

"Faith no! We must be our own sureties!" He turned to Lady Gowrie. "Lady, I grieve that you should have borne this. I feared it would be no better. May I offer you a home at Thirlestane till—" his eye wandered to Davison—"till a better day?"

"Sir——!"

"No need of thanks, madame. Since our friends in

England fail us at need, we must stand the closer together. Master Craig, will you conduct Lady Gowrie to her lodging? I will provide escort in the morning."

"Ay, Sir John. You have done a good work," said the old man. Sir John shrugged his shoulders, and Craig led Lady Gowrie faltering away. When she was gone Sir John turned to Davison.

"You have done a good work. There it goes!" and he pointed after them. "But I detain you. Doubtless you have greetings for the Earl of Arran." And he went out.

But on the next Sunday fierce denunciation of the Earl of Arran rang from a hundred Scottish pulpits; on the next Sunday a courier galloped into London with despatches not much less fierce for Walsingham.

## CHAPTER XI.

### "I AM THE MASTER OF GRAY!"

SIR JOHN MAITLAND, the Secretary, pacing slowly down the gallery while his thin lips parted in a smile, felt a hand on his arm, heard a voice :—

"By your leave—I am the Master of Gray, sir." The Secretary turned and looked at him in the faint light.

"And you are he——?" he said, and stopped.

"I am he who has admired your—" Gray paused—"benevolence," he added in a moment, and allowed himself to smile.

"I think you are also he who had the misfortune to incommode the Earl of Arran?"

"The misfortune," said Gray gravely.

"Then, sir, allow me to warn you of the misfortune of incommoding us both."

"As who should pull Scylla's tail, and launch spurs at Charybdis' maw? Scylla and Charybdis? 'Tis an ill similitude. *Mordieu!* I have forgot my mythology—but Scylla and Charybdis, were they not—friends?" Gray laughed as he saw the Secretary's eyes ask plainly whether he had fallen on a fool. "No, Sir John—I am clothed (in a fashion) and in my right mind (such as it is). I intend to incommode only one—whereby it is possible I may best serve the other."

"Your intentions, no doubt, are worthy of you. At present, sir, the Earl of Arran limps, and I—may not even do that," and he glanced at Gray's hand on his sleeve. It fell at once.

"A thousand pardons! I will bid you farewell, and I would remind you only that I am the Master of Gray." He bowed and drew back. But the Secretary stood still, stroking his moustache.

"And go—whither?"

"Ah, can you doubt? To your *alter ego*, your Pythias, your Pylades, your Jonathan. How! Should I go to your foes?"

"On what errand then—would you go—to my friend?"

"To offer my humble aid in the cause."

"Which cause?" said the Secretary sharply.

"May I remind you—I am the Master of Gray?" and he smiled amiably upon the Secretary.

"And you will honour me by coming to my lodging in the Canongate." Gray bowed.

"*Enfin!*" he said prettily, and the Secretary smiled.

So in the September twilight two men went out of Holyrood and up the Canongate. They went the same way, but there were twenty paces between them. Soon both vanished through an archway on the left, down a close under the shadow of Salisbury Crags where the red houses jutted out to meet each other on either side.

In a little oak-panelled room the two sat down together with a bottle of wine.

"To oppressed virtue, a godly minister, an English soft — heart!" said the Master of Gray drinking. The Secretary leant his chin on his hand and looked over the table at Gray.

"You said you came on an errand?" he suggested.

"*Mordieu!* that was modesty: on two at the least!"

"Two?"

"Of the most magnificent. Errand the first: take up the cause of a prisoned Queen, earn the gratitude of M. de Guise, King Philip of Spain, our Holy Father the Pope, and Father Edmund Hay. Destroy Jezebel, who is a scourge, a viper, the scarlet woman and Pontius Pilate—become the champion of distressed beauty and the innocence of the Kirk o' Field. Stand out knight-errant of Bothwell's pure widow, and——"

"Hang on Kirkcaldy's gibbet!"

"As a ladder to heaven. Consider the beauties of heaven! Errand the first then: go to heaven!"

The Secretary, looking at Gray's dark laughing eyes, smiled a little.

"I prefer to be with my friends," said he. Gray nodded gravely.

"Ay; and there are too many fools in heaven—very well. Errand the second—it is there!" He gave the Secretary Cobham's letter, and leant back to watch the reader's face. He smiled as he found there no sign of feeling or thought. In a moment the Secretary laid it down.

"You will pardon me if I do not understand. You were pleading on behalf of Queen Mary and the

Catholics—but this letter tells me that you are eager to work for England and Elizabeth."

"The letter knows best," said Gray.

"And yet——?"

"And yet. For I am the Master of Gray. Suffer me to be tedious a moment. I am Elizabeth's man—if it were worth anything, I would give you my oath—but is that less reason for knowing all the plans of Queen Mary? I think it is the more necessary. I am come because I was weary of the Holy Catholic Church with her plots that led nowhere, her lies that deceived no one, and her martyrs—her martyrs! *Quelle gêne!* But it appears that I am not less, but more welcome to madame Elizabeth if I am not too quick to be off with the old love." He looked at the Secretary and smiled, and the Secretary's thin lips parted, and his brown eyes began to sparkle. "Ah, you perceive," said the Master of Gray. "Wherefore, I approach you—on behalf of our father in God, John Bethune. And you—beyond doubt you reject me with the scorn of an honest man?"

"Do I?" said the honest man innocently.

"Ah . . ."—Gray leant over the table—"Elizabeth will conquer, we know it, but Elizabeth will not pay. The noble army of martyrs—well, they are all going to heaven, but in the meantime they pay. It would, beyond doubt, be dishonourable to let the martyrs pay for Elizabeth's work. How ill made the universe is!"

"But," said the Secretary, "it would be a grave

scandal that faithful servants should go unrewarded. The labourer—" and he looked Gray in the eye—"is worthy of his hire."

"Who," said Gray, "would muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn? . . . I may tell our reverend fathers then, that the Secretary's heart still yearns for Holy Church, so sadly torn in these later days by the deceits of the devil? The poor Church!" and he smiled.

"It is," said the Secretary, "an old and generous faith."

"Marvellously. But in holy zeal I forget myself —may I hope for your aid to give me work for the English cause?" The Secretary's face hardened. He shook his head.

"Sir, the friends of England here are in too grave danger for one—who wishes you well—to claim you for her cause." Gray started. The deep, soft voice rang with meaning; half-closed the brown eyes glittered. Then he went on smoothly: "Moreover, I am distressed, but 'tis not I but the Earl of Arran on whom England relies." Gray began to curl his moustache.

"*Nullum numen habet, si sit prudentia*—Arran!" he quoted gaily. "Arran! A bogey to frighten bairns! *Mordieu*, let me go to England! Eh, but it grieves me that they should trust Arran. It must grieve us infinitely!"

"Infinitely," said the Secretary, and Gray laughed.

"Ay, but 'tis cause for tears! They trust Arran? Assuredly I must save them from their friends. I

am a perambulating god from the machine. Yes, I must go to England—" he stopped and laughed—"for I am the Master of Gray."

"You go—but then?"

"Then—*Arranus ducitur unco.* Arran comes down by the heels!" The Secretary looked at the laughing black eyes, inscrutable as his own. He saw a smile on the beautiful face, the smile of an artist enjoying his work. "Ah, but how will you bear the misfortunes of your friend?"

"I shall endeavour," said the Secretary, and allowed Gray's eyes to persuade him into a smile. "For when Arran is gone, we may hope that more trusty counsellors will stand by the King," and he bowed to the Master of Gray.

"What nobler cause! The commonweal of two realms and——" He bowed to the Secretary. "But I have detained you too long with idle talk!" He sprang up. "*Dame!* I had almost forgotten. There are a few trifles in silver—in the French taste—may I hope? Ah, I am honoured!"

"You are kind, sir," the Secretary held out his hand. "I shall count on you as a staunch friend of England since——" He looked curiously at Gray.

"Since that is the conquering cause! *Mordieu*, let us end with the truth!" cried Gray with a laugh. But outside in the close:—

"*Têtedieu*, we did not!" said the Master of Gray, in content.

## CHAPTER XII.

### *NOS ET CEDAMUS AMORI.*

THE sun lay bright on the dark waters of Restalrig Loch, and the rushes glittered golden as they swayed in the breeze. On the sloping turf beside the lake lay the Master of Gray. A book was open before him, but he was looking away beyond the grey walls of Restalrig House on the cliff hanging over the water, away to the bold red crags that stand guard over Holyrood. Grim and rugged, they were not to his taste, and he turned back to the book. A wild duck flapped noisily out of the rushes, then another and another.

"*Terque fragor stagnis auditus Avernis!*" he read from the page before him, laughing, and as he looked up he saw a man coming. "Well—what Orpheus has lost his Eurydice? What!" He raised himself on his hand. It was a man very thin and bent, heavily cloaked despite the hot sun, a man who walked very slowly looking where to plant his footsteps. He came nearer, and Gray saw his face, strong and handsome still, though the cheeks and the dull eyes were sunken. "George Douglas!" Gray muttered.

It was George Douglas, the man who had given up all that makes men care for life—home, fortune,

friends—for the sake of a hopeless loyalty and a hopeless love. His reward was plain to see: on his wrists was the mark of the rack; his ugly painful gait told the same story as the livid scars.

"George Douglas!" said Gray aloud. Douglas saw him and smiled.

"Your servant, Patrick," he said, and Gray winced as he tried to bow. He sat beside Gray on the grass. "Is all well?"

"Yes," said the Master of Gray in a moment. "And with you?"

"Very well. I have a letter for you." Gray started. "Yes," said Douglas, "from the Queen." He smiled a little.

Gray took it and broke the seal. It began in Queen Mary's old impetuous way:—

"GRAY—

"*Je ne croyrai jamais que tu sois changé envers moi*——"

Gray turned on his side to find a better light; but Douglas was not looking at him. So the letter went on, eager and passionate. She could not believe that Gray had changed, she was sure that her son loved her still, she begged Gray speak for her to him, and her last word was her first, she would never believe that Gray would change in his faith to her. So——

"*ayez memoire de moi,*

"MARIE."

A moment Gray looked westward into the eye of the sun: for a moment a strange feeling disturbed him,



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and then arose irrational anger that the priests had spoken their distrust of him to the Queen. And he looked back at the letter with a smile. "*Ayez memoire de moi?*" He had another than the Queen to remember—another who would never believe that he had changed in his faith to her. And he smiled and put the letter away and turned to George Douglas.

Douglas was turning the pages of his Virgil, but looked up at him with a smile.

"The Queen honours me too much," said the Master of Gray.

"The Queen has few now in whom she can trust."

"'Tis sadly true," said the Master. George Douglas sighed, and Gray, looking at the sad, worn face, was moved to say, "Ay, few who have been worthy of her trust as George Douglas". Douglas flushed like a girl and fingered the book again.

"What is all this, Patrick?" he said quickly. "'Tis too hard for me."

"This? The lamentable history of Eurydice and Orpheus, who went down for love of her to the lofty halls of Hades—and lost her after all."

"He loved her?"

"It is so in the story."

"And he could not save her?"

"Eh—he made a mistake, and he lost her." Douglas turned over the pages with more interest, spelling out the words here and there like a schoolboy. Gray looked over his shoulder.

"How the words cry! *Invalidasque tibi tendens heu non tua! palmas.* And the poor Orpheus, he had

been down to Hades for her!" he explained. Douglas put the book down and sighed again and rose. "Love is lord—and a brute, George." Douglas shook his head and smiled sadly.

"Is that what they say in Latin, Patrick?" He held out his hand. "God keep you!"

"What! Need you go?"

"I dare not stay. No, Restalrig offered me quarters, but I must be gone. There is much afoot, much to be done—for our Queen." Gray took his hand.

"Eurydice—Mary—ay, 'tis ever the same. Love is lord—Orpheus—poor Patrick Gray—we all bow, George." He smiled. "Love is lord!" Douglas wrung his hand and turned away.

"*Mordieu!* But that was true," said the Master of Gray in surprise.

And George Douglas went away to Leith glad at heart as he thought that there was another ready to give all, as he had given all, for his Queen.

## CHAPTER XIII.

### *ARCADES OMNES.*

ANOTHER poor brain was struggling with the Master of Gray.

"Damn you," said the Earl of Arran, and scratched his head, "'twas the Secretary recommended you for England! Damn you, I thought you were an Elizabeth's man?" The Master gave his low musical laugh.

"And indeed I have heard the same of you, my lord. Well—in this cold world Patrick Gray stands by Patrick Gray. Elizabeth will pay? Good! I do her the honour to accept. Mary has a little gift? Good again! I will not repulse her."

The Earl of Arran laughed loudly.

"This is what I like!" he cried. The lids drooped over his bright blue eyes. "A man knows how to have you, eh?" The Master bowed. "No stalking you to find where you stand. Well, what was that about Guise?"

"Oh—the Duke is charmed that you should offer him your services——"

"Death and the devil! You knew that?" The Master sat smiling a moment before he answered.

"It appears. Well, he is anxious to do something quickly." The Master paused and looked at Arran.

"Quickly, it is understood. He would purpose to land in Morecambe Bay while Mayenne throws himself on Sussex."

"And what a pox do I make in all this?"

"Ah! Shall we say—what you can?" He gave to Arran an ingenuous smile. "He always pays, does he not? Why not lend him your thoughts on his campaign—would it be for the first time?—with what promises your conscience permits."

"And let you carry them to Elizabeth, I suppose?" Gray laughed.

"My dear lord, if you like. But without my aid letters have reached the Guise before. Why then should I see this?"

"Then what do you gain by it all?"

"I gain—a testimony of my faithful service to the Catholic cause writ in my Lord Arran's own hand."

An usher came in.

"My lord, the King waits."

"Let him wait! Go you rascal!" The Earl thought a moment and then began to laugh. "Humph! I begin to see." Gray bowed politely. "So you want to keep your Catholic wages?"

"With your kind aid," said the Master of Gray.

"And go to England to earn others?"

"You understand me," said the Master of Gray, "completely."

"Well, you are a man I like!" cried the Earl, rising magnificent in cloth of gold. "No cursed cant!" and he clapped Gray on the shoulder. "Come, then, let us go to the fool King!"

As they went downstairs they heard the King's peevish voice:—

"But it was an hour ago he bade me come to the audience room—a full hour ago, Sir John!"

Arran laughed as he came in.

"Well, and if I did—sire?" he said, and stood over the lad. King James cowered.

"Nothing, my lord, nothing at all. I was here, on my word, I was here." Curious, even in his fear, he peered round Arran to look at the Master of Gray. "Who is yon bonny man?" The Master stepped calmly round the Earl of Arran, and fell on one knee and kissed the King's red bony hand.

"Patrick, called Master of Gray, sire," he said.

"Man, ye're very bonny," said the King.

Arran laughed.

"Shall have that in your letters of credence, Gray," he cried, and chose an easy chair. Gray and the Secretary were standing. "To business, then. Your Majesty is pleased to approve that he goes on a special mission to England?"

"The bonny man?" said his Majesty.

"Wondrous wit you have. Yes."

"And what for will he go?"

"To bind you closer to your good cousin Elizabeth, sire."

"An ornament to her sex," said the Master of Gray.

"She keeps my mother in gaol," said the King.

"The better for you," growled Arran. "And to persuade Elizabeth that she send Angus and the Hamiltons out of England." From behind the King

there came to Gray a flash of the Secretary's brown eyes.

"That she send them," said Gray, and he coughed, "out of England."

"*Exsul Hyperboreum si dimittatur ad axem*," said the King—"eh, my bonny man?"

"Beyond doubt, sire," said the Master of Gray. "They would adorn the North Pole."

"But he was a lewd fellow, my man," said the King, and chuckled. It occurred to the Master that his Majesty referred to Juvenal. The King jerked himself out of his chair and began to shuffle up and down the room, his loose lips working. Arran looked at Gray with a cynical smile. The Secretary, after his manner, had drawn back into the shadow.

"Ye see, my lords," said his Majesty, "she will keep my mother in *duresse*. And a'though in physic we take the mother to be no more than the *nutrix* (the nurse, my lords), wherefore we do hold the true filiality to lie to the father—yet in all ages it hath been held inferior to sovereign dignity to join in amity with any ruler who should treat with despite more distant kin than the mother of a party to the bond. Witness——"

"Witness here, witness there!" cried Arran sharply, and at the ring of his voice the King checked like a horse on the curb and stood trembling. "Listen!" He went up to the King and tapped on his shoulder. "Are you content that Angus and Hamilton plot to murder you while they sit safe in England?"

"M—murder?" stammered the King. From the

gloom behind Gray felt a hand touch his arm. "M—murder?"

"And with the best of chances—sire," said Arran coolly. The King shivered. "While they are let stay in England, I tell you frankly, I fear them like the devil."

"With good cause," said the Master of Gray blandly, who meant that Arran held the rich Angus lands.

"My lords, let us have a bond," cried the King. "My bonny man, will ye do this work? Make her drive out these bloody loons! E'en let her have what she will, my man, to be quit of them." The Master bowed.

"But what of our sovereign dignity?" said Arran with a sneer. The King's fat lips fell apart and he gaped. Arran laughed aloud. "What of the mother in *duresse?*" The King had no enthusiasm left for his mother, and he shivered under the scorn of Arran's look and tone. "Bah! when we are quit of the Hamiltons, when we have got what we may by our bond, we will consider our dignity and our mother." He turned a look at Gray. The Master of Gray understood completely. Then he came forward to the King and knelt again.

"You approve the mission, sire?"

"Ay, my man, ay. . . . With necessity the gods may not fight. . . . And ye might get what ye can for us. The Guises are over close. And, my man, my bonny man, see if ye can win to a pair o' stag hounds—*veloces Spartæ catulos acremque Molossum.*"

The Master bowed gratitude for the King's con-

fidence, and was turning away. The King foresaw that he would be left alone with Arran and his lip fell.

"Ye need not go, my man," he cried.

"He has much to do," said Arran, and Gray, who was not aware of it, agreed. "I will see you in the morning for your letters and some jewels I would have you give the Queen." Gray covered a start with another bow, and he and the Secretary went out.

The Secretary took his arm.

"She is avid of jewels," he whispered; "this will make her tender to Arran," and he frowned.

The Master of Gray curled his moustache.

"On the contrary, 'twill make her hate Arran infinitely," said he, and he laughed. "Our dear Arran!" And to the Secretary insistent he would say no more than that "Our dear Arran!"

It is upon record that Lord Hunsdon, who received the Master of Gray on the border, found him devout and skilful in the use of the English prayer-book.

## CHAPTER XIV.

### EFFIE'S APPLE.

NOW the Master of Gray left Scotland in a hurry, for he had heard that Lady Kinaldie was come to Dalkeith to stay with Lady Arran, and he did not like the conjunction. Once in England, he saw his way very clear, and he did not choose that Elizabeth should lose her new, her invaluable friend—himself—in a dungeon on the Castle rock. Logan and he were gone—but the Master had not forgotten the duties of nature. Wherefore Robert Ogilvy rode clattering through Lasswade on an October morning with letters of greeting, farewell, promises of speedy return for the Lord Gray from his son.

Mellow autumn sunlight poured down upon the hills, and all around Ogilvy the woods shone brown and crimson and gold. He also shone—from the pearls in his ears to his silver spurs. He was crimson too and brown—in an arrangement which he had seen and admired upon M. le Vicomte de Tonnay. Upon himself he admired it more. By the favour of heaven the road was neither dusty nor muddy; the careful splendour arranged at Restalrig remained immaculate as he turned away up a border road where golden beech leaves flashed above him and lay, a bright silent carpet under his horse's hoofs. On the hill

above him a grey tower rose into sight through the trees.

Out of the beech wood he came by an open gate into an orchard. Sheer above him on a red crag rose Ridlaw Tower. Ogilvy sat upright and dusted his clothes. Some one might have the wisdom to look at him from those narrow windows. And while he adjusted his collar an apple hit him on the cheek. Ogilvy reflected: apples fall in October—but they do not fall horizontally; also the apple might have been dirty. So first he wiped his cheek, and then he looked whence that apple had come.

Framed in the grey green apple leaves he saw a girl's laughing face. Black eyes glowed bright, a little line of white showed between her full lips, the round cheeks were like snow.

"Hurrah, Robin!" she cried; and Robin blushed. He took one foot out of the stirrup, put it in again, and finally took it out. He sprang to the ground, tied his horse to a tree, and bowed magnificently. "Bravo, Robin!" cried the girl in the tree, and clapped her hands. Whereby she slipped, and was near coming upon Robin's curled head, but caught a branch in time, and did no more than reveal one slim leg in a red clocked stocking. Robin, the pride of courtesy, looked away. "Lord, ha' mercy! Come up Robin, man!" she cried laughing, and getting firm hold with one hand and a foot she stretched down to him long fingers stained with lichen and, as Robin observed with grief, a little sticky. With due care, for his boots were inept for climbing, he set his

foot on a knob and sprang up to the fork beside her. Then unwisely he wiped his hands.

"Lend me that, Robin," said the girl, and took his handkerchief of Mechlin lace and made it green and grey with lichen and brown with apple juice. "Well, and you have not greeted me yet, Robin," she said. "'Tis strange ways they will have in Paris!" and she drew to the other branch and pouted and looked at the apples.

Robin Ogilvy became brave and put his arm round her waist and his lips to hers. But she slipped her hand in between.

"Indeed, sir, you are over bold!" she cried. "Can you not see I am a woman, Master Robin Ogilvy?" and she tossed her black curls.

"I would rather not," said Ogilvy sincerely, and tried to take the hand away. At once she gave a little jerk backwards that made Ogilvy forget the duties of love and grip the tree hurriedly with both hands. She laughed—her brother's low musical laugh.

"Robin, Robin, you are no more than half a man!" she cried.

"It was not fair, Effie," said poor Robin, hitching himself up.

"And why should I be fair?" said Effie, with a flash of her bright eyes. Ogilvy made a joke.

"God made you so," he said, and bowed as well as he could.

"And who made you, Robin?" Ogilvy offered a blush.

"You are as cruel as ever, Effie," said he.

"Cruel? Hear the man! And you ha' been gadding among the foreign dames these two years. How many are a-dying all for the love o' Robin?" Ogilvy again offered a blush—and a compliment. Neither very new.

"I have seen none to match Effie Gray," said he. Effie tossed her head.

"And did you come just to tell me that? Fie, Robin! You are deafening me with all your foreign loves and never a word of Patrick! Do I care for your fine ladies, man? I am fain to hear of Patrick all the time—'tis shameful in you." Ogilvy gasped.

"Effie, you would not give me the chance," he pleaded.

"Chance, indeed! And who hinders you now?" The white cheeks flushed in just anger.

"The Master has gone to England," said Ogilvy.

"To England? At once, without a word? Oh, it was unkind," she cried, and the black eyes grew misty.

"No," said Ogilvy. "It was necessary." He curled his little moustache. "A matter of State. I have letters for your father." He was pleased to revenge his wrongs.

"And none for me, Robin?" cried the girl, catching his arm.

"I believe," said Ogilvy graciously, "there is something for you."

"Then why do you sit there chattering like a magpie? Give it me at once."

"I was wondering," said Ogilvy placidly, still playing his own avenger, "if I had not left it behind."

"If you have, I will have you whipped!" cried the girl. Ogilvy looked at her. There was no flush on the white cheeks now. The black eyes were glowing. "Yes, whipped, Master Robin!" Ogilvy laughed; not very gaily, for he had met Effie's anger of old.

"How wild you are, Effie! Of course, I have the thing on my saddle there." The next moment Master Robin Ogilvy was on his face in the grass.

"Then get it!" cried Effie, as she sprang down.

Ogilvy dusted his clothes ruefully.

"You little wild-cat," he muttered. But he went incontinent to his horse, and pulled two letters from a pouch. Effie snatched them.

"And now, good day to you, Robert Ogilvy, and no thanks for your coming," she cried, and ran off. He came after her, but she stopped and turned. "No, Master Robin—not to Ridlaw till you are grown a man. Long years, Robin. Away with you!"

"Effie," cried Ogilvy disconsolate. He had ridden from Restalrig. "Effie, you'll not bid me go without——"

"An apple, Robin, an apple. I gave it you!" She ran off laughing.

"I shall give it to Bayard—the horse," Ogilvy cried after her.

"Horse or ass, 'tis all one!" was her answer.

"The vixen," Ogilvy muttered, looking after her.

But he was a man of sentiment, and he went back to look for that apple. Bayard had helped himself.

On his way back he reflected that after all Effie

had achieved her own punishment. For she would not see Robert Ogilvy till many days were past. That thought brought him much satisfaction, wherewith he rode southward after the Master of Gray.

But Effie called him a fool because he had not come after her in her despite—and then cried.

## CHAPTER XV.

### THE FAIR VESTAL THRONED BY THE WEST.

"GOD'S passion, man! Will you play with me?" The voice rang deep as a man's; the table jumped and rattled under her clenched fist; the brown eyes flashed fire. It appeared to Elizabeth that the Master of Gray was lying—a fault she bore impatiently in others. Wondrous to behold she sat between Walsingham and Burghley, both sombre and grave, immobile, expressionless. No light shone in their eyes; their foreheads were marked across and across with wrinkles; their thin hair and beards were growing white. Both watched the beautiful Master of Gray without interest, for they had seen his like before, very narrowly, for his like was dangerous. But Elizabeth, wondrous to behold, sat in a dress stiff with golden embroidery. Golden snakes, toads, tortoises, dragons lifted their heads and leered at Gray from her bosom. Diamonds flashed on her ruff and in her red hair. Her thin cheek was dark with anger, and she beat the table with her fist and thundered:—

"God's passion, man! Will you play with me? Here is Arran writes that you are his friend!" And the Master of Gray smiled and bowed.

"I have had the honour to advise your Majesty to disbelieve the Earl of Arran."

"Do not mock at me!" cried the Queen. "You come on his behalf."

"Madame, no man less. I come on yours." The Queen was left a moment speechless. In that moment Lord Burghley said very quietly:—

"Why?"

"Ah! my lord brings me back to the truth. I am grateful. Because your Majesty is in grave danger." The Queen laughed and waved her hand.

"The old story," she said scornfully. But Burghley and Walsingham leant each a little forward.

"The old story, madame, no doubt—with a setting somewhat new. Your Majesty now finds the Queen of Scots ready to treat with you—even some way you have gone in treaty with her . . ." He paused a moment and looked at them in turn. Well hidden he read surprise. "Surely a new setting—something of a new setting to the old tale?"

"God's death! Dost know more of our counsel than ourselves, sirrah?" cried the Queen.

"It is perhaps possible, madame—since I know the counsel of others," said the Master of Gray. He paused.

"Of others," said Walsingham, tapping his arm. "Of others. Yes?"

"And yet your Majesty's wisdom has no doubt divined——" He paused again.

"Divined. Yes?"

"Why a humble servant of your Majesty may be no friend to the Earl of Arran."

"That have not I. Arran has been trusty ever

as he writes now. In this letter that speaks of his gift of jewels——" The Master of Gray started.

"Oh—the jewels," he repeated. "The jewels!" and he looked at the ground. "*Mordieu!* madame, you are going to destruction, blind, blind! Mary lulls you to content with fair words, ay, and the while lances are gathering in Scotland. Money from Philip, money from Guise flows into Arran's purse. He breaks the Ruthvens, the Hamiltons, the Church itself—all that your Majesty has of firm support in Scotland. And you know nothing, see nothing. God, what is Master Davison doing in Scotland? Is he dumb and deaf and blind?" Burghley and Walsingham exchanged a glance. This tallied word to word with Davison's last despatch. Burghley wrote on a paper:—

"*Hoc idem* Davison," and put it under the eyes of the Queen. She looked at it, and she too grew thoughtful. But she laughed and said lightly:—

"Scotland? And what ill can all Scotland do? Here be thunders!" The Master flushed, and gratified her by saying a little more than he meant to tell then.

"Scotland? Enough, madame, to make ill hap worse when Guise lands in Lancashire and Mayenne in Sussex."

Then Burghley leant back and pulled his beard.

"So that is the plan," he said with relief, and he looked with much interest now at the Master of Gray. The Master saw that if he had shot sooner than he meant his bolt had hit the mark.

"Wherefore I come to offer your Majesty the amity and aid of my master King James," he said, bowing.

"Who commends to us," said her Majesty, reading, "his and our trusty servant the Earl of Arran, who is to his youth a Nestor." She smiled at Gray. "And how will you get out of these toils, master fox?" Gray smiled back.

"Your Majesty's peerless sagacity has already perceived. In chains of happy servitude to England's Pallas Athene are kept a band of rude soldiers—Angus, Hamilton, Colville, Glamys. Let them cross Tweed, and out of the earth like Cadmus' brood men will rise and drive forth this Arran who dares—*mordieu!* I know not half he dares!" He broke off artistically. The Queen smiled at him. This style was more to her taste; but much less to Sir Francis Walsingham's, who tapped Gray's arm again.

"Who dares, in effect, what?"

"Dares at the least to work for Guise—dares at the most—I tell you, sir, I do not wish to think of what he would dare at worst." Walsingham did not conceal a shrug of doubt.

"Well, master fox, rid of your *monstrum horrendum*, what then? Your master will not be content with nothing."

"Your Majesty is generous," cried Gray quickly. From the face of generous Majesty the smile vanished incontinent.

"What do you ask?" she said in a rasping voice.

"A poor pension would suffice to make the true cause strong—would put the King safe beyond the power of such great Popish lords. Five thousand pounds——"

"What? God's passion! would you have me sell my crown, sirrah? Do you think I am queen in Potosi, rascal? Where should I find five thousand pounds withal to give your master?" She turned fiercely on Burghley and Walsingham. "And you, my lords, you will beggar me before you make an end, you and your brothers in Christ, who will be my very humble servants while I do my duty and pay them. God's body! you would have my poor realm find money for all the fools in Christendom that must go a quarrelling with Spain or Rome. What a pox have I to do with your ranting Presbyters? Let them ding one another deaf for me!" She banged her fist down on the table. "And you, sirrah! You would have me drive out Arran, the good soul that did my work and never asked a penny, and——"

"Certainly he asked nothing of you—of you, madame. He took his wages elsewhere."

"Little man, little man, will you teach me wisdom? What ails you with Arran? Why do you betray your friends, Master Judas? Where are those jewels, rascal?"

The Master of Gray hesitated.

"The jewels, madame," said he, "are here."

"Then show them, knave."

The Master of Gray bowed. From inside his cloak he brought forth a coffer, sealed with a big seal. He

rose and came to the Queen and knelt and offered it. She took it quickly and broke the seal.

"Madame, ere you touch them—one word :—

*'ulla putatis*
*Dona carere dolis Danaum ?'"*

The Queen looked at him and laughed.

"Have another verse :—

*'Quæ tanta insania—vulpis ?'"*

But the Master did not laugh. Close by her he stood, watching eagerly, one lithe hand on the table edge. She opened the coffer and her narrow eyes glistened. The jewels were splendid, for they had belonged to the great Ruthven house, to the widowed Lady Gowrie, who sat at Thirlestane waiting for revenge. Diamond, ruby, sapphire, the gems sparkled in Elizabeth's thin fingers. Arran's bait was good. Then as she turned them over an emerald flashed. Gray's hand pounced on hers and held it up.

"Ha! I thought it!" he cried.

"God's death, sirrah! are you mad?" the Queen thundered. He held her hand still.

"Nay, madame; pray, you look long at that ring ere you handle it." Then there was silence, and he heard the heavy breathing of Burghley and Walsingham, for Cobham had warned them of gift rings. The Queen, who never knew fear, looked up into his eyes.

"What is it then?" she said. Then Gray let go her hand and turned the coffer out on the table. To this side and that he swept the gems very carefully

till alone in the midst lay the great emerald ring. A scrap of parchment was tied to it. By that Gray held it up. On that was written the posy of the famed golden apple, and a cunning rendering—

"τῇ καλλίστῃ—For the fairest Queen."

"So we see who was to wear it, madame. Even my Lord Arran knew so much," and he bowed.

"And why should she not?" said the Queen smiling.

"Because, madame——" Out came his glove and his handkerchief. The Queen breathed with satisfaction a faint scent of lavender. It was the old device of Paris. A stuffed finger ran through the ring—out came the little golden fang.

"God's death!" the Queen muttered.

"Because," said the Master of Gray, "your Majesty would not put all the men of England in mourning." Swiftly, before she could think, he turned to another strain. "But, alas for me, how can I ever be forgiven that I was the Fury to bring gifts such as this? Of your infinite grace, madame, remember at least that I warned you. I knew the half—I knew Arran would have you share in the plunder of Ruthven—Ruthven who died for your cause—and therefore I warned you. But, before God, of this last devilry I knew nothing: else had you never seen them, never had this ill moment to bear. And now I am shamed before you, peerless Queen of Beauty and Honour." He was very beautiful, with his big eyes downcast and his cheeks white as a girl's against the black rippling hair. Burghley let a glance go to Walsingham. In

timid entreaty, Gray laid his hand lightly on her arm.

"Tush, man. Why, master fox, you are timid as a hare, with your big dark eyes. Hast done thy devoir, *mon lièvre*. But, God's wounds, this Arran of yours must be a devil! We must deal shortly with him. What, my lords?"

"Madame, I have said nought else for months," said Burghley bluntly. And Walsingham was franker still.

"With this purpose come earlier, madame, my lord Ruthven had not died." The Queen flushed, and flushed the darker because she knew it for truth.

"Well, my lords, your wits were ever keen," she said mildly enough. The ring lay, a testimony of the ways of her foes, on the table. "We will let the hounds slip." Her eyes grew smaller: the corners of the thin lips turned down. "My lord Angus was praying leave to go to Germany. Sir Francis, you will let them go —to Germany. We will teach my lord Arran to send such posies!"

"And to make Majesty partner in his crimes," said Burghley quickly, eyeing her. She looked longingly at the jewels awhile, then brushed them away with a petulant gesture.

"If Ruthven had not been a fool——" she muttered.

"It may be he had not trusted to England," said Walsingham. She laughed.

"Art a bold knave, Walsingham. Well, your brothers in Christ will be singing psalms a Sunday now! Let the knaves go ding down Arran. And you, *mon lièvre*—will you go help them?"

"With good will, madame. But in my master's petition——" Burghley coughed. "Your Majesty will consider of it?" He went on quickly, seeing the Queen's brow darken. "For I can tell your Majesty much more of the danger from foreign foes —when I return."

"We will consider of it," said the Queen rising, and giving him her hand to kiss. When she was gone:—

"I fear you will find that a harder work, sir," said Burghley.

"*À la bonne heure*, my lord," said the Master of Gray. "I shall be very useful to her Majesty," and he laughed.

"You have done in an hour what we have not done in a year," said Walsingham. The Master of Gray appeared surprised.

"I?—not I, but Arran himself."

"Certainly . . . Arran . . . himself," said Walsingham slowly, and looked at him.

"*De mortuis nil nisi bonum*," said Gray lightly. "My lords, I must to horse—for Angus will be soon in—Germany, and I must be there first."

"You will dare——" cried Walsingham.

"I always dare," said the Master of Gray, and with that and a bow he went out.

In the corridor he found laughter seize him, for the value of M. de Biran loomed suddenly gigantic.

## CHAPTER XVI.

### HOW A MAN WENT DOWN TO JERICHO.

THE twin brethren sat disconsolate in a little room at Stirling Castle. The Master of Gray, striving vainly to put his head out of the window, looked down the narrow Castle Wynd. Logan drank. They laboured under a vivid sense of wrong. Nobody seemed to trust them.

"*Ventre du Pape*, Patrick, why——" The Master of Gray jumped.

"Logan, if you say 'why'—or 'how'—or 'when'—or any damned bleating interrogative, I—I shall lose a friend. Why does the wide wide world come to me for knowledge? 'Tis cursed unchristian, Logan, this passion to know. O faithless and perverse generation! I never knew such yearning for intelligence. Arran, curse his impudence, wants to know why I came back before I had made a bond with Diana across the border—and the Secretary, confound his shifty face, would be gratified if I could tell him why Angus is so long a-coming—and the King, damn him for a fool, must know why I did not bring his damned dogs! What a plague is the end of all these questions? Are they any better off when they have had their little lie apiece? Logan, pray for faith. It is useful and inexpensive."

Logan laughed.

"I would like to hear what you told Arran, Patrick."

"More thirst for knowledge! A devilish poor lie, Robert. Diana, so please you, asked for a month to consider of it. Patrick Gray, like a gentleman, graciously acceded. And do you know, James, Earl of Arran, is pleased to think that a remarkable story. I have not found faith on the earth! *Mordieu!* he is inconsiderate. I will be bound, he could have made no better a lie himself. I gave him of my best, and he is dissatisfied. 'Tis an ungrateful world, Logan." Logan drank.

"What I do not know, Patrick," said he—Patrick groaned—"is what good we do here. The fact is we are like to go the same gait as your good forebear sent the Douglas in this same castle. See here, Patrick, we stay lest Arran hear of Angus's coming and kidnap the King. A most noble emprise, Patrick: but, please tell you, how could we stop him?"

Now the Master of Gray was looking down the Castle Wynd.

"The Lord," said he, "will provide." Logan swore. "Logan, do not blaspheme—yet. We may need it later. Take a look at that man." He gave up his place at the window.

"That is the child of grief that came to the *Godly Meg*," said Logan. "Patrick, he is coming here!"

"This," said the Master of Gray, "grows interesting."

Logan, craning his neck, reported:—

"Right on and—curse the bars!—over the foot-bridge." He turned rather red in the face, and the

pair looked at each other. Gray put his hat on, put Logan's hat on, and they went out. From the stair they saw the priest come into the Outer Square, turn sharp to the left and enter the palace.

"Arran! For a crown! To Arran!" muttered the Master of Gray.

"Ay, and what for?" growled Logan.

They waited, invisible from without, and they had not long to wait before the priest came out again. Gray pulled his moustache.

"'Tis the better chance!" he muttered. "Follow him, Logan!" Logan stared at him.

"*Ventre du Pape*——"

"My beloved Logan, do not say 'why'!" Logan stared a moment longer: chuckled: departed.

He did not return. In a little while the Master of Gray met Arran, and found him surprisingly gay. Gray admired his own wisdom, and recovered faith in the ways of heaven. In the afternoon they went a-hawking, a jovial party, and Arran and Gray the gayest of all. But it was Arran who brought them back early, and the Master of Gray betook himself to his room by the gateway at once. He was rewarded. In the mellow October twilight he saw Arran ride out with a couple of men, and he smiled and resigned himself to wait. Waiting, reading with his head on his hand, he heard a gentle tap at the door. He looked up and saw the Secretary. The Secretary glowed with joy, and insisted on shaking his hand.

"It appears," said the Master of Gray, "you are happy."

"They came to Jedburgh two days ago," said the Secretary. Gray shrugged his shoulders.

"And so they may be at Jedburgh while Arran cuts our pleasant throats," said he. "How many men have you in the castle, Sir John. Ten? And I have two, and Arran has two-score." His foot beat the floor impatiently. On the stair was a heavier foot, a clatter of sword and spur. The door flew open; in burst Logan.

"Ho, ho, Patrick! A man went down to—hullo!" —he beheld the Secretary and bowed—"Jericho, Sir John." The Secretary smiled.

"And fell——"

"As you kindly suggest. For the roads are shamefully unsafe under Arran's governance!" He looked at Gray to know whether he was to tell more.

"Sir John is impatient, Logan." Logan drank.

"Sir John, that sinful man Arran has sought to take bribes from the bloody Guise."

"I trust that you prevented the crime?"

"Long Tom McQuhatta is sitting on two bags of gold at St. Ninian's: a priest of the Church is lying in a ditch: thus God is glorified," said Logan piously, and he laughed and drank. The Master of Gray smiled.

"Our dear Arran! He will be inconsolable. Imagine his language!" He laughed gently. "But here is no time for laughing yet. Logan, can you get us a score good fellows who will take our crowns and ask no questions?" Logan laughed.

"A score? A thousand!"

"A thousand—no. Our dear Arran might wonder what we were about. A score stout fellows then—and the sooner the better. Let them come one at a time and ask one for me, and one for Sir John. How things grow easy when pockets are full! Ah! Logan, the plane-trees' entry—you know it?"

"By the back brae?"

"Yes, with gates infinitely ugly. Logan, those gates must distress your love of beauty."

"Beyond doubt," chuckled Logan, "they distress me damnably."

"Then *en route*, my dear Logan! 'Tis you have the crowns." Logan drank a last cup of wine and ran out. "Sir John, can we send a message to Angus?"

"Well enough. But why then—for he should be here to-morrow?"

"Ay, outside," said Gray, drawing pen and ink across the table. This is what he wrote and gave to the Secretary:—

"The way to Germany is up the back brae and through the plane-trees' entry.

"GRAY."

"I make you my compliments," said the Secretary. "You think of everything."

"I think of my neck," said the Master of Gray.

And in this manner the Duc de Guise provided for the downfall of his dear friend Arran. This is why the Earl of Arran came blaspheming home to Stirling

through the quiet October night. Unjustly he protested to heaven the treachery of M. de Guise.

Strange tidings saluted him. One Jock Stewart had come to the castle. Jock Stewart announced an army no farther off than Falkirk, an army of Hamiltons, Maxwells, Douglases—rogues and reivers all. Who led them? Jock Stewart would not go so far as to say. Whence had they come? Jock Stewart slowly pronounced his opinion that they had come from their homes. And why? Jock Stewart would not deceive the Yerl, and therefore would not say. He conjectured that the Yerl would know.

The Earl said in his haste that all men were liars, and sought the Master of Gray. The Master, in bed and very beautiful, suggested that Jock had looked upon the wine when it was red. With mirth he declined to believe that Angus and the Hamiltons were back; he apprehended their arrival contemporaneous with the Messiah. By the Earl's gracious leave he proposed to sleep.

The Earl went up to the tower above the gate. There on the battlements, as the night waned and October passed into November, he watched in the starlight the quiet town. Many an hour he watched and saw nothing. Falkirk was far away. And the drawn broke, and he went to bed.

While the morning still was grey there was a miller's wain in the High Street, and the horses saw the provost and took fright and bolted, while the carter clung to the reins and vainly howled. He contrived to turn them down to the plane-trees' entry,

and striving like camels to pass through a needle's eye they broke two wheels and two gates. And this was a great joy to the smaller folk of Stirling. But the provost spoke of the judgment, and while he bade clear the wreck away swore that the miller should hold account with the burgh.

## CHAPTER XVII.

### BY THE BACK BRAE.

"YOU look delightful," said the Master of Gray. A score of villainous faces grinned at him. Logan had chosen well; and the Master of Gray surmised that he had been down to hell to find this little company of the elect. One bore a hideous scar from eye to chin; another had raw red flesh where one eye should be; another was purple and bloated with drink; another had his mouth extended towards one ear; another had no nose; one and all wore the dinted black breastplate and the buff coat of the soldier; one and all, spite of marks of drink and debauchery, stood straight as a pine and handled their weapons like men who had proved them; one and all had the big bones and something of the great muscles of the Laird of Restalrig.

"You look delightful," said the Master of Gray, reviewing them. "But I wish Logan would come."

And therewithal Logan came.

"Patrick," he cried. "Ha, lads—ah—hum——" He scratched his head and began to talk dog Latin. "*Venit quidam*—" he went on with difficulty—"*equo spumante—nuntius Arrano.*" Whereby Gray learnt that a messenger had come on a foaming horse to Arran. A moment he touched his moustache. "*Et*

*nuba—nubus*—oh, damn the Latin—there's a cloud of dust on the Linlithgow road." Then Gray laughed.

"Gentlemen, you are very opportune. Follow me!" He ran downstairs to the courtyard, and up the steps to the Secretary's room with Logan and his elect clattering after. In the little anteroom was hardly space for all. "Gentlemen, I am desolated to tell you that the Earl of Arran is a traitor." They received the news without emotion. "At all costs we shall keep him—outside." They chuckled: there was a rattle of pistols. "I see, gentlemen, you abhor treachery. It is very well."

And then from within they heard the King's querulous voice.

"Sir John, 'twas arms! I will make oath it was arms! Man, are ye fou? Dinna open the door, man!"

But the door was opened, and the Secretary's narrow eyes looked out. He saw Gray's delightful company and turned pale.

"Gray?" he stammered. "What——?" Gray shrugged his shoulders, spread out his hands, laughed.

"What would you? Satan comes to drive out Satan. Pray, assure his Majesty that I will answer for his safety with my life." Over Maitland's shoulder the King's goggle eyes, the King's tremulous lips, appeared.

"My man, I dinna want your life, I want my ain," said his Majesty. "Oh, my bonny man——"

Below in the courtyard Arran's voice arose:—

"The King, you cursed fools, where is the King?"

"Will it please your Majesty," said the Master of Gray, thrusting him gently back, "to go in." He shut the door. On the instant Logan took up the work. With copious oaths the men were posted here and there; and in the midst of Logan's objurgations footsteps rang on the stair, and voices.

"With the Secretary, ye say—ha!" The Master of Gray came quickly to the stair head. Eye to eye, breast to breast, he met Arran—Arran dark with rage, his eyes fierce and bloodshot.

"Ha?" said the Master politely.

"Out of the way, fool!" cried Arran, and tried to thrust him aside. The Master of Gray, buoyed upon Logan's great chest, stood firm.

"There is," said he, "a cloud of dust, my lord. On the Linlithgow road."

"God damn you! I tell you the Hamiltons are loose——"

"Precisely. There is, on the Linlithgow road, my lord, a cloud of dust." Arran caught at the balustrade; the veins in his neck were swollen; his face grew purple.

"You black liar!" he muttered, then his voice rose to a scream, "you knew it! You brought them!"

The Master of Gray shrugged his shoulders and smiled.

"My dear lord!" said he, "in the delights of my society I fear you neglect more pressing duties," and he bowed gracefully.

"Devil burn you for a black knave! You said you were my friend——" The Master of Gray laughed

gently. "And you bring these devils down on me. The Judas curse on you——" His dagger flashed high.

"Logan," said the Master of Gray. Over his shoulder came whistling Logan's fist, and Arran flew backwards down the stair cursing and crying:—

"Shoot, fools, shoot!"

"Thank you," said the Master of Gray placidly. Logan and he withdrew behind the door-post. "A man of no refinement, my dear Logan."

Arran's men rushed at the door. From behind the overturned table four pistol shots cracked, and the stairway was choked with a dead and a wounded man. Thereat Logan remonstrated.

"*Ventre du Pape!* Shoot straight, fools! D'ye think the devil will lodge you for nothing?"

And below Arran swore wildly.

"Up, up, knaves! Up and seize him or we are all lost!"

"He appears," said the Master of Gray "to——"

Up they came, and the pistols cracked and the leaders fell, but on into the smoke they charged. The little room was full of a mad, cursing crowd. No room was there for sword-play. Breast to breast, limb to limb they struggled, and death came from dagger blows under hand or a pistol clapped to a man's ear as he struggled helpless to raise his arm. Gasping in the sulphur reek, sweaty and stained with other men's blood, every muscle at strain, they pressed madly at each other.

"On, on for your lives! Break them, stab them! On, curse you, on!" Arran roared.

Gray was jammed in a corner, his hand to another man's dagger. Logan was behind him, wriggling. Suddenly Gray heard him chuckle. He had an arm out—an arm that bore a musket. That was the turn of the fight.

"Break, knaves," Logan roared. Down he drove the musket-butt with a dull thud, and Gray saw a man's brains run down his face. The limp body gave. "Break, break!" Down came the dripping musket again. "Work, ye mis-begot devils!" Logan shouted.

"The King, or we are lost!" cried Arran, but his men were giving way. Little by little they were forced back. Dead and living went headlong down the stair together.

"Ye—jelly-backed—loons," panted Logan.

And Gray laughed hysterically.

"He appears—to apprehend—the situation," he gasped. They were all breathless and reeking. "The sit—situation," Gray gasped, coughing and laughing. He was very white. He caught Logan's arm. "Logan, my dear, the situation," and he laughed again. Logan stared at him. And he was gasping it out again when sudden above the confused chatter at the stair rose a loud dull roar. Gray brushed his hand across his forehead.

"Logan! The gate of the plane-trees' entry! You remembered?"

"Ay; they will be sweeping it up now!"

"Good!" He was himself again, resourceful, forgetful of nothing. "Listen!" They heard the scurry

of feet below, and loud above all the shouts the tramp of an army. "They are come, *mordieu*, and he is gone!" cried Gray. "Open the window! Take away the dead! Clear the blood away! Quickly!"

"Quick, loons," roared Logan, knocking them this way and that.

And Arran was gone. Alone he galloped headlong through the gathering crowd in the Hie Gait, and men and women fled out of his way as he thundered round the sharp narrow corners of St. Mary's Wynd. To the chattering town-guard by the bridge he came and snatched the keys of the Bridge Gate. He locked it behind him and flung the keys into the Forth and fled away to Doune. He had thrown for power and lost. He had made a friend of the Master of Gray. And he fled alone, to wander a landless, broken man till he died at last in a brawl and his body was eaten by dogs and swine, even as Master Craig had prophesied. Which gave great joy to the Church.

The while Logan's elect were toiling under his wrathful eye to cleanse all signs of the havoc they had wrought, and the borderers with Angus at their head came marching up to the castle, and prudent merchants hid strong boxes in linen presses, and the baser sort lined the causeway, and matrons protested they were undone, and maids looked out of the window and the provost raved.

The Master of Gray, one of few, was adequate to the situation. Employing a pistol, he persuaded the warder to let the drawbridge down. He walked out on it alone, smiling. Away beyond his sight stretched

the dark array of the borderers, tipped with the gleam of steel. In the van the banners of the border lords fluttered gay, with the bleeding heart of the Douglas foremost. On they came still with a dull broken noise of hoofs. Now there was glitter of mail to see among the dark ranks; now he marked swart, scarred faces; now plumed hats spurred forward through the press.

The Master held up his hand.

One hoarse shout answered him, then many together, and the order went echoing down the line. A while the column swayed backward and forward, then halted, and it gave up two riders in bright harness. The Master walked on towards them as far as the drawbridge end.

"The Earl of Angus? My lord of Mar?" his musical voice rang out. "A pleasure so unexpected! I had heard you were going to Germany." And spurring on, the riders cried together:—

"Are you the Master of Gray?" The Master tossed back his curls.

"For my sins," he said. On the instant Angus and Mar sprang clattering to the ground, and each seized a hand of his in their mailed gauntlets and wrung the delicate fingers mightily. "Eh, for my sins!" groaned the Master. Together again they cried:—

"You have him safe?" And the Master, feeling his fingers tenderly, asked:—

"Which him? Our dear friend Arran had duty pressing otherwhere. Haply in Germany, my lords." The Earl of Mar stated a wish as to Arran's future.

"*À la bonne heure*," said the Master of Gray.

"But the King?" cried Angus.

"The King?" Gray smiled. "The King awaits you with anxiety, with anxiety, *mordieu!*"

So they went to find him, moving noisily in their mail, with a score of followers clattering behind. At the foot of the stairs they found Logan—Logan bare-armed and blood-stained at the head of his bloodier ruffians. Logan bowed.

"Servant, my lords. The chestnuts are out of the fire. He is upstairs, our majestic chestnut."

They found his Majesty clinging to the Secretary's slim knees. His Majesty whined and whimpered and begged for his life, while the Secretary testified to gods and men that the life of King James was more to him than aught else in the world, and still he tried to raise the grovelling monarch, and the monarch would not be raised. So the Master of Gray beheld them, and muttered:—

"*Sursum corda!*" under his breath. But the King saw Angus and Mar in the panoply of war, saw the glitter and heard the clash of steel, and he wriggled round Maitland's legs. His goggle eyes, his fat tremulous lips were pressed to Maitland's trunk hose, and he whined the louder. The border lords gaped. Maitland still strove to calm the King, and made with one hand an impatient gesture to Gray. The Master, biting his lip hard, laid a hand on Angus's shoulder and on Mar's.

"Kneel, kneel!" he muttered, pressing them down. They knelt clattering, and the King shuddered. "Mercy!" muttered Gray.

"What?" said Angus aloud.

"Mercy—ask for it!" the Master hissed. Then:—

"Mercy, sire!" cried the Earl of Angus.

"Sire, mercy!" cried the Earl of Mar.

His Majesty, still on his knees, came from behind Maitland's legs.

"M—mercy?" he stammered. Gray and the Secretary looked at each other. There was a moment's ridiculous pause. There in the middle of the room knelt the lords glittering in full armour, each with one mailed hand flung out in entreaty. There, not too near them, knelt the King, his hose twisted all awry, his fingers plucking feverishly at their fastenings, while his loose lips shook to and fro and his face grew crimson and white again.

Gray whispered as he could:—

"Protest, protest you——"

"We protest!" cried the two Earls in chorus, and the Master struggled with his emotions. He bent down again and whispered in Angus's ear:—

"Mean him no harm—hold him all honour—crave he hear your cause."

"We protest," cried the Earls, "we mean no harm to your Majesty's person! We——" In a sudden flash of wisdom Angus did off his sword and laid it down before the King. The King started to his feet. "We protest—we hold your Majesty in all honour. We——" Mar stopped. Angus went on: "Crave only that you deign to hear our cause". The King retreated and chuckled, but retreated still.

"Ye ha' gotten yourselves audience, my lords," said his Majesty.

"We shall plead, sire," said Angus, rising, "for no more than our just due."

The King looked cunning.

"Eh, my lords, the Earl of Arran——"

"Has his already, sire," said the Master of Gray, and he bowed.

The King grew pale. He looked at Gray, and Gray smiled benignly. He looked at Angus and Mar, and they made themselves appear as amiable as nature and armour allowed. The King leered at them.

"God save ye, my lords—then we'll ha' enough for all," said he.

Now the next day there came a letter from Elizabeth to her "Right dear brother," which announced in the true Elizabethan manner that she had yielded to his request and bidden Angus and Mar leave England. She mentioned that she had given them passports to Germany.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### A QUEEN.

IN good heart the Master of Gray rode southward. The world was very good. Far behind him were the bleak northern hills, the mists and the biting winds of his own land. Here all around, in the heart of England, lay deep-bosomed meadows, and rich brown corn-land lined faintly with the delicate green of the springing corn. The hedgerows were golden, and the willows that drooped over the silent river. Everything was agreeable to the Master of Gray—the sunlight, the west wind, the chatter of birds. Moreover, he was flourishing as the green bay tree. In the winter Angus and Mar and Hamilton had come quietly to their own—not without profit to their dear friend, the Master of Gray. The King was safe in Maitland's hands, and happy with horses and dogs, numerous beyond his dreams. The King was pledged to Elizabeth, by word and oath—which were little enough—by Maitland's assurance that to help his mother to freedom was to lose his own throne—which was much. The Master of Gray perceived with enthusiasm that he had done brave work for this cause, chosen in good time. He foresaw with satisfaction praise from those whose praise he most valued.

"And, faith, I deserve it," he said to himself, and

laughed his musical laugh. He, Patrick Gray, had arisen, and the enemies of Elizabeth were scattered. Even Lady Kinaldie—for a moment he found himself wondering what had happened to her in this new diaspora. After all, she was the most beautiful woman that he had seen—save one. Then in an æsthetic spirit he began to consider the question, and he brought up before his eyes the slight curves of that lithe figure, the grey eyes dark as a mountain lake, the russet hair, and the cheeks daintily tinted. He saw May Cobham, and his eyes sparkled. He had earned the right to see her, to think of her, to—Logan chimed in aptly:—

> "Whoso to marry a minion wife,
> Hath had good chance and hap,
> Must love her and cherish her all his life
> And dandle her in his lap."

So chanted the Laird of Restalrig lustily, as became a man of much experience. And the Master of Gray smiled.

They were rising now, up from the rich meadow and tilth of the valley to the thin turf of the Oxfordshire downs. The track grew white and stony, and once on the crest, Gray spurred on faster. Logan remonstrated.

"Patrick, you skeleton! Do you want Sampson to burst himself in toiling after your bag of bones? O, *Ventre du Pape*, remember mine!"

On they rode, frightening the sheep, over the bare hills till the forest trees of the royal demesne at Woodstock rose before them. Down the hill through

the town, and on spite of vigorous complaints from Logan, by the side of the park till the trees were left behind, and on still by a red level track through the meadows, while the sun fell crimson behind the dark western woods. Through the gathering night mist they came to Oxford, and they were close on Bocardo tower when Logan checked his horse suddenly with an oath, then spurred it sharply.

"A ghost?" said the Master. Logan laughed.

"I should not trouble for that. 'Twas some face I knew," and he frowned and strove to remember. He was still striving when they halted in the Corn-market at the Ship Inn, and the Master magnifying his apostolate for the sake of his body's welfare, obtained such quarters as he desired. That night Logan, drinking hard to aid his memory, became very drunk. He did not remember.

He was left sleeping quietly as a child when the Master of Gray and Ogilvy went out in the morning, escorted by a gentleman of the Queen's household, Nigel Vardon. The night mist was gone; a warm breeze from the west filled the narrow streets; on spire and battlement and tower the spring sunshine glowed. Here and there between the grey stone walls the branches of budding trees flickered and shone. Down St. Aldate's they went and along Boar Lane, the Master and Vardon clattering noisily in front, Ogilvy modestly behind. As they came out to the open space between Christ Church and Oriel, Ogilvy suddenly cried:—

"Sir!" The Master and Vardon turned.

"Well, Robin?"

"Who is that man?" Ogilvy pointed towards the High Street. The Master looked, and frowned.

"I know no one," said he.

"He has gone," said Ogilvy, puzzled.

"Well, who was he?"

"I do not know."

"Robin, Robin, you sat over long with Logan."

So they went on to the gate of Corpus, and there amid a gay throng of courtiers they dismounted. Between guards who saluted, ushers who bowed, the Master of Gray passed through the porch, and was shown up a steep narrow winding staircase to a room over the gateway.

Wondrous as ever sat the Imperial Votaress, and the sight of her dazzled the Master of Gray. Her bosom was ablaze with diamonds. The ruff rising high to her red hair was studded with sapphires. A dragon-fly wrought in emeralds caught up her curls over her right ear, and from that hung a heavy diamond pendant. The thin white neck was almost hidden under ropes of pearl. The dress, marvellously narrow at the waist, marvellously wide below, was rose red, and on it stood out in golden embroidery the gorgons, hydras and chimæras dire that were ever dear to her heart. Even the snakes and the gorgons must have their eyes of diamonds and rubies and emeralds. Full on her fell the sunlight, showed the thin face with its rouge, flashed and sparkled in many-hued darting rays on her jewels.

The Master of Gray was dazzled. He emphasized

the fact—put his hand to his eyes and faltered and fell headlong forward on his knees.

"Goddess, I am blind!" he cried. The goddess smiled, the goddess put to his lips a divine hand laden with rings. He kissed it passionately.

"Fie, *mon lièvre!*" she cried.

"Ah, cruel Dian!" murmured the Master of Gray, and sighed. The goddess laughed. He was a pretty sight kneeling before her, his black curls falling about his pale cheeks, cloak of russet velvet thrown back from one slim square shoulder, while his fingers clung to hers. "Huntress of hearts!" he sighed poetically. The goddess laughed again and stroked his curls.

"Come, rise, *mon lièvre.* 'Tis our pleasure that you sit!" He sprang up, bowed profoundly, and was conscious suddenly of a man's presence. Behind her chair stood Walsingham, and his dull eyes scanned the Master of Gray. That attention the Master acknowledged with a bow, found a chair, said :—

"Since my Queen commands——" and sat in it. He drew a long breath. "Ah, to be back in the sunshine of your Majesty's gracious presence—'tis to come like Ulysses back from the tenebrous halls of Hades to the divine air and the splendour of Phœbus." The while he knew that Walsingham's gaze was steady upon him. The goddess took his hand and fondled it.

"Then why didst stay so long in the nether gloom *mon lièvre?*"

"That stern necessity that binds the gods," said the Master of Gray. "Nay, even as the fabled mouse,

goddess, kind fate has granted even to me to work a little in the lion's cause."

"Art my servant, *mon lièvre?*" the goddess whispered tenderly, while her thin fingers closed on his. He pressed her hand gently.

"Am I infidel?" he said softly. She smiled. "Ay, now there be true men stand by my master's side, and I—I may snatch a moment to spend in Elysium." He sighed. "But a moment—for even now——" He sighed again, and let his head fall on his hand.

"Now?" said Walsingham quietly. The Master of Gray looked up.

"Now?" he repeated, and he laughed. "Ah, Sir Francis, why speak of it? Let us snatch the happy hours!" He pressed the goddess's hand and looked tenderly into her eyes. But her narrow eyes grew smaller and glittered.

"Eh, and what now, *mon lièvre?*" she said sharply.

The dark eyes grew pathetic.

"Are even the gods yet safe—ah, my Queen, even now are those *omne nefas animo moventes.* Philip—the Guise—still they strive to pile Ossa on Pelion, to climb Olympus, to drag Diana down!" Diana let go his hand. Diana frowned.

"Pelion! Ossa! God's body, speak out!" The Master bowed.

"Since your grace permits, madame. 'Tis a brief, bad story. My master wishes your Majesty all things well. Trusty counsellors stand at his side: my Lord of Angus, Sir John Maitland, Sir Lewis Bellenden—true to your Majesty as I. But withal there is another

party—Gordons, Stewarts, Kers—over strong to hold or to bind. And they, madame, they are fed by the purse of Spain while my master is King of a poor realm, and no help he has anywhere save in your Majesty." He paused a moment and looked at her. Her eyes were almost closed. Her fingers beat on the table. "Therefore, I beseech your Majesty's aid." Still the thin fingers tapped the table.

"Her Majesty's aid," said Walsingham. Gray turned to him.

"Ay, Sir Francis, as you suggest. With her Majesty's powerful aid my master might secure her throne against the attempts of Spain and Guise and——" He stopped and coughed.

"And against his own mother!" cried Elizabeth.

"'Tis even too true," said the Master of Gray.

"God's passion, sirrah, be plain! What do you ask?"

"Oh, but little, madame! No more than a bond between your Majesty and my master and the aid of a poor five thousand pounds in the year." The Queen flushed.

"God's body, sirrah, your Scottish insolence bears you too far!" she thundered. "I do not fear your Mary or your Guise. What——"

"Then I have been deceived," said the Master of Gray quietly.

"What cause have I?" she cried.

"Doubtless, none. Doubtless, I am wrong. I can only grieve that I have troubled your Majesty's happy carelessness, and beg your leave to go." He rose,

put back his chair and knelt. But she did not give him her hand. She looked back at Walsingham, and Walsingham gave her an angry glance. She smiled.

"Nay, *mon lièvre*—I see that you have something to tell. And you," she caressed his curls, "you will forgive a maiden's hot blood and tell me—will you not?"

"Ah, what is forgiveness from me to you, lady?" sighed the Master of Gray, as he rose from his knees. He drew up the chair again. One hand felt in his bosom, and he took out a packet of letters. Walsingham's eyes glistened. "Ay, Sir Francis—'tis true they are somewhat. Will you do me the honour to read them?" With a bow he gave Mary's letters to her bitterest foe. "Ay, madame, they are somewhat, but there is more—more than ever you have found in hand of writ." Walsingham's hands were busy with the papers, but he looked up an instant and signed to the Master of Gray to go on. "Of late there was caught one, Crichton—the poor Father William—" he paused to bestow on his dead confessor the tribute of a contemptuous smile—"there was found on him the account of that invasion whereof I had the honour to advise your Majesty. Eh, but you did not find on him the true plan—the plan that some day will come to action unless your Majesty take heed in time." And he paused for effect. Walsingham looked up.

"Speak out, sir," cried the Queen.

"Is it pleasant to speak such tales? This it is—some day there will come to Mary's prison a band

of gentlemen—they will cut her out of her gaoler's hands. Then, madame, some day to you—ah, forgive me, but 'tis too true—there will come a new Balthazar Gerard, a new mad murderer, and you are to fall, and my lord Burghley and Walsingham. On the border rise the Howards and Scrope and Dacre. Parma crosses the straits. Guise or d'Aumale comes over the channel. Huntly or Bothwell seizes my master. Ah! madame, you smile. All the world knows you have laughed at danger for thirty years. You may laugh, but can those who love you? Ay, and you, madame, can you laugh at England trodden down under Parma's heel? Dare you think of England tortured by Spain—England, your realm for you to guard, will you put it in peril of rack and strappado, all the devilry of Spain?" The Queen was flushed and her eyes were shining. There was no smile on the thin lips now.

"God, do you tell the truth, man?" she muttered.

"I swear before God it is their plan," said the Master of Gray. He had made it for them himself. And the Queen drew a long breath. Behind her spoke Walsingham very calmly:—

"Ay—and the proof, sir?"

"What! and you know nothing of it, Sir Francis! You with your legions of spies."

"There are spies," said Sir Francis, looking at him, "whom one does not trust." Gray flushed.

"Is it for me to teach them their trade?" he cried.

"Perhaps," said Walsingham coolly. Gray started to his feet. "Nay, sir, nay, you take me amiss.

Indeed, I believe you. But how can we know when the bolt is to fall? For I tell you frankly—quite frankly—of all this save only the invasion I hear now for the first time. And we have thought that of Catholic plots we knew a little. So—by her Majesty's leave"—she bent her jewelled head—"I ask you in return for what her Majesty will grant"—she looked at him fiercely—"for what," he repeated, "her Majesty grants . . ."—their eyes met—"I ask you—is there any way in which we may learn when this bolt will fall?"

Gray lay back in his chair and laughed aloud.

"Any way? God keep you, Sir Francis, a score! But now that her Majesty lends my master aid, less need for any."

The Queen's clenched hand fell crashing on the table.

"God's passion, sirrah, do you mock at me?" she thundered. Gray bowed.

"You have no truer servant, madame, than the Master of Gray," he said quietly. "But will your Majesty tell me whether this is asked of me to prove me, or frankly as from one who would know my device?" Sir Francis touched the Queen's hand.

"By your Majesty's leave——" She bowed. "Sir, I answer frankly—I ask to both ends." Gray broke out with a *cordieu*, and Walsingham held up his hand. "Nay, sir, consider: it would have been easy for me to lie. Many a man has come with like tales. None, I confess to you, has done so much for us as he who drove out the Earl of Arran. And yet, can you make

complaint if I ask for proof ere I trust an old servant of Queen Mary, and promise when that proof comes to give that trust? I have been frank."

The Master of Gray bowed.

"Sir Francis, you are right. To the proof then: it is harder, is it not, for a camel to go through a needle's eye than for letters to pass into and out of Tutbury?" Sir Francis smiled. "Yet they go, they go, and you know it," and he laughed.

"It is the obstacle—they go," said Walsingham.

"Obstacle? Faith, 'tis the way round it. They go painfully. *Mordieu*, let them go easily. There will be more of them. Let them go through your hands. They will be instructive." He laughed. "Make a way for them—see that you watch that way. Faith, 'tis easy as laughing. Find some fellow —ay, buy some fellow, let him make a secret way—a chamber in a beer cask. Why, 'tis the very tactic we need. Whom does she trust, the distressed lady? Holt—a fool, but alas, honest. Hay—neither fool nor knave. Crichton you hanged. A pity—he would now be useful. Ballard—I have heard he desires a heavenly crown. To assist him there is—Parry—but you hanged him. You have been extravagant, Sir Francis." He smoothed his curls and pondered. "Gifford! Young Gifford! He was ever thirsty. I think, Sir Francis," he chuckled, "I think young Gifford would leave his orisons for the ring of English crowns. Here we have our *necessarium quid*. Gifford is—acquired. Gifford announces to Holy Church that the folly of heretics has laid

open a new path. Good. You have found a knave brewer—that should not be hard, as Logan says—and in his casks you build a secret chamber. In your madness you allow him to supply beer to the honourable and distressed lady. Also he supplies letters to her. You—read them. The answers return in the empty casks. You would not be so boorish as to open a lady's letters. But you could. So, Sir Francis. *Quod erat demonstrandum.* Is it proved?" And Walsingham muttered:—

"At last! At last!" Then he looked up. "Ay, sir: I doubt you no longer."

"Ah!" said the Master of Gray, with a little sigh of relief. But the Queen's brow was troubled. She leant forward, and her piercing eyes scanned Gray's face.

"Sirrah, do you tell me Mary has plotted at my life?" Gray looked at her and did not answer.

"Madame . . . madame, I do not know," he said at last. The Queen's eyes flashed.

"Then, what is all your tale?" she cried. The Master moved in his chair under the fire of her glance.

"Of that part of the plot would they tell her, madame?" he said softly. "She need not know. It might be dangerous to her that she should know——"

"God's body, what does that mean?" the Queen thundered, and the Master turned a little pale, but he said:—

"And would it not be dangerous—to one in your power—even to one who has been sovran—that she

should plan your murder? . . ." There was silence in the room. "Bah, but they would not tell her," cried the Master. "They could not be mad enough to tell her." Walsingham eyed him curiously. The Queen frowned and played with her rings. The Master's lips moved, and he said nothing. Then, and his breath came quickly, then he leant forward across the table and touched the Queen's hand. "Madame, it might be that by another way you could learn how far in plots she has gone." The Queen looked up quickly. "Send to her some one to ask how it comes that she plots with Guise and Parma. Let him hint of more—of all. She will grow angry—she is hot of blood—by what she says in her anger you may learn how deep is her own knowledge, her own—guilt."

"And will not that warn her?" said Walsingham quickly. Gray turned on him.

"And would you not rather warn her of plotting murder than catch her in the crime?" he cried. Walsingham said nothing.

"'Tis a good plan, 'tis a good plan," said the Queen thoughtfully. She smiled on the Master of Gray. "Art a good servant, *mon lièvre*. It shall be done."

"Frank Somers is trusty," said Walsingham quickly.

"Ay . . . it shall be done. See to it." She rose and gave her hand to Gray. "You will attend us to-night, *mon lièvre*." He sighed.

"Ah, lady, am I not stricken already?"

And she went out smiling. The Master of Gray turned to meet Walsingham's dull eyes.

"Sir, you have done much good service." He held out his hand. Gray took it.

"Sir Francis, I love your cause better than all things in the world save one," said he.

"Your honour?" said Walsingham quietly. Gray dropped his hand and went out.

Left alone, Walsingham looked round the oak-panelled room, looked up at the coats of arms painted on the ceiling, looked down again at his hand, and smiled.

## CHAPTER XIX.

### THE ONE THING.

THE dark stair brought the Master of Gray suddenly to the bright light of the quadrangle. Many-hued as the rainbow was the throng of courtiers who strolled this way and that, stopping to quote Latin at the primroses pale in the shadow of the wall, gathering under the gilt arms on the gateway to bandy long repartees. The Master of Gray was well known, and was greeted with the reverence due to him who had had a long audience of Diana. He did not rely on that honour overmuch; he was prodigal of smiles and small jokes and compliments. Soon he was dragged perforce into an argument.

"Whether Plato, king by right divine of the philosophers, did well to banish the poets out of his *Respublica?*"

Fulke Greville, insistent in peach-coloured velvet, begged for "his sentence most worthy of reverence". Gilbert Champernowne took his other arm and pled for his piercing wit and grave counsel to pronounce. The Master tossed back his curls and excused his poor wit.

"Nay, but if I must speak then, out of what commonwealth did Master Plato banish them."

"The perfect polity!" cried Gilbert Champer-

nowne. "That which is in the realms of heaven!" The Master laughed.

"That he put it no nearer, good thanks to Master Plato. Nay, faith, little should poetical sonnets be hurtful in that polity where so little know they of the true and knightly devotion, that free rein they give to desire like the beasts that perish!"

"*Habet!*" cried Fulke Greville.

"But consider, for I think you wrong a so learned philosopher." Gilbert Champernowne expounded the Republic as they passed under the archway by the chapel door and out to the garden. Then suddenly the Master of Gray cut across a disquisition on the pure dianoia, and cried:—

"*Mordieu!* 'tis Sir Philip."

It was a man in a cassock coat of pale blue. His hat and his hose were of cloth of silver overlaid with gold lace. He was tall and slim, and his face was like a woman's but for the little light-brown beard and moustache. Sir Philip Sidney turned at his name; the lady turned who was by his side. Sudden and hot the blood leapt to Gray's cheeks: her own were darker still.

Fulke Greville saved them. He turned to face the breeze, and he cried:—

"What is it in Dan Plato, Gilbert? Like a breeze from a goodly champaign bearing health? Surely he was an Oxford scholar!" The Master plucked off his hat and bowed to the ground. The grey dress broke shimmering in a curtsey. She dared not look at him.

"Lady—lady—ever your most humble servant." He had the words out at last. "Sir Philip, at your command!" They bowed. Behind the Master of Gray, Greville and Champernowne saluted the lady, and Sidney, cumbered with many answering bows, said:—

"Philip Sidney is your servant, sir," and he smiled, "as of all whom my mistress delights to honour from the height of virtue's throne." Then he turned bowing to the girl. "Ay, and true servant, lady, of all who, happy, have your favour.'"

"We are friends of old," said May Cobham softly. Sidney and Greville, the two friends, looked an instant at each other, and Greville struck quickly in:—

"Philip, here is Gilbert, who preaches heresy and sacrilege amain, laying impious hands on the sacred ark of poesy, and all for the cause of one Plato a pagan. My poor wits have wrought with him." The Master of Gray drew to the girl's side and Sidney moved a little away. They stood together looking at the wooded Berkshire hills rising high above the water meadows. Like a man in a dream Gray heard Greville's voice: "My poor wits have wrought with him. To my aid comes a very perfect knight, the Master of Gray. Yet the infidel triumphs. Philip, run a course with him for the honour of poesy!" Sidney laughed and turned to the girl.

"Lady, here is a Queen of highest fame, heavenly poesy, demands my aid. May I take sword and shield in her cause?"

"So please you, Sir Philip: do valiantly!" said the girl, with a little smile and a curtsey.

Now they were left alone in the garden beside the grey city wall. Primroses and daffodils shone on the grassy bank at their feet and the scent of violets was in the air. A long time they stood silent, while the birds chattered in the elms and laughter came sometimes ringing from the quadrangle behind. He was very close to her and his shoulder touched hers; as she felt it she leant a little backward and the man's breath came quick. One hand hung idly by her side and he took it in his. There she let it rest. Now she did not blush, but her lips were parted in a strange tender smile and her grey eyes were shining.

"We are friends of old," he said softly in her ear. She laughed, and looked up into his eyes.

"Nay, is it so long, sir?"

"'Tis all my life—all that I count of life. Before—what was it?—an ill dream!" He drew her closer yet. "Lady, when I bade you farewell in Paris I said I went to the proof. And now, now that I see that you again——" Black and russet curls met, his breath was hot on her cheek.

"Now of those whom the Queen delights to honour is the Master of Gray, sir," she said quickly.

"Her Majesty is kind . . ." He paused. "And I said in Paris, some day under the North Star I would tell you——" His voice grew hoarse.

"Tell me . . .?" She looked up into his eyes. In the beautiful pale cheeks her blood was glowing, her eyes smiled at him and her mouth.

"My lady—my queen," he muttered hoarsely. Her head fell back on his shoulder, the russet curls brushed his cheek and he caught their fragrance. His arm passed round the yielding waist, her hands lay in his.

"I knew—I knew," she murmured happily. She sighed and smiled in the fierce grasp of his arm. "I knew always you would be true."

"You knew why, my queen," he whispered.

"Yes."

"Better, better than all things in the world save one I love your cause." Her eyes opened wide. "And you best of all—better than Queen or country or faith, my lady, my love."

"Ah, not that!" she cried.

"'Tis true, love," said the Master of Gray. "God knows, 'tis true!" and with that he kissed her. There in the spring sunlight she put her arms round his neck and drew his head down to hers. She kissed him and lay on his breast breathing quietly and slow as if she slept.

"Sir Walter, Sir Charles! I insist!" Sidney's voice rose strangely loud. "Nay, gentlemen, sentence we will have! Stand and throw us your wit. Stand, in the Queen's name, stand!" He was beneficently boisterous.

The man and the girl drew quickly apart. He flung his cloak quickly on the bank as she gathered her skirts to sit down. She thanked him with a smile.

Sidney with three or four came through the cloisters talking and laughing. Sidney wheeled them sharp

to the right between Corpus and the Christ Church walls.

The Master drew from his finger an old massive ring set with sapphires. It came from the casket of the Gowrie jewels. He pointed inside it: in letters crowded close was written—

Gif trew report
To yow resort
Of my gud port
So tak me!

He read it in a low voice, and fell on his knee to give it, looking up into her eyes. They were dark and misty as she took it, and her fingers trembled. Trembling still her hands went to her neck, and she took from it a little golden heart and gave it him.

"'Twas my mother's, sir," she murmured.

The Master of Gray took it and kissed it. There was graven on it :—

"*Aymez loyaulté.*" He said it aloud, and then, "Lady, with all my heart," he whispered.

In a moment while they lingered there together many voices came to them, and the Queen and her lords and ladies thronged the garden. May slipped her hand through the Master's arm, and proud and happy he led her away. For a good price he had sold his Queen to death. His love was won.

Sir Francis Walsingham drew aside to let them pass. Looking after them, he smiled, for he had an ingenious mind, and he wondered whether Judas Iscariot had loved a lady, and wondered what she thought of him.

## CHAPTER XX.

### OUR LADY OF BABYLON.

"*MORDIEU!*" said the Master of Gray suddenly, and then he laughed. "Good Sir Philip, behold and worship!"

Sidney followed his eyes and saw the splendour of Lady Kinaldie.

"At the shrine of Venus? I' faith, sir, we poor men may thank God for such a sight."

"I do not," said the Master of Gray with decision. Sidney looked at him, and together they drew back from the front rank of the crowd to the panelled wall. On the daïs at the end sat the Queen, grave and reverend signiors made her grave compliments, and she seemed weary. Below her the great Christ Church Hall was full of her gay court. "I do not," said the Master of Gray. "Venus? Eh, it is possible." He tapped Sidney's arm. "Venus—was she hand and glove with d'Aumale, with the Guise? Nay, sir, I think God has little to do here. How comes our Guisard Venus beside the Queen?" Sidney frowned.

"You like it little?"

"I like it not at all! But who is the host of our Venus of Rome?"

"The treasurer, Sir James Crofts." Gray put up his shoulders.

"Then, Sir Philip, I like not your treasurer either." Sidney started. Gray smiled at him. "Eh—he is suspect then already? *Tant mieux.*" And Sidney began to laugh.

"Sir, you are like to be burned for wizard and warlock!"

But the Master of Gray had lost interest in the conversation. Afar he saw the glow of May Cobham's russet hair, and Lady Kinaldie and Philip Sidney and all the rest became persons of no importance. Sidney understood and fell silent. In a moment the Master turned to him.

"Sir Philip, let me lack courtesy," he said with his pleasant smile, and Sidney said:—

"That you can never do," and bowed, and the Master of Gray slipped through the crowd. Sir Philip Sidney quoted under his breath from his own works:—

"'Here you fully do find this strange operation of love'." And in the midst of that remarkable hexameter he observed that Lady Kinaldie was looking towards him and bowing. He did not know her at all, and was puzzled a moment—till he thought of the Master of Gray. But Lady Kinaldie might have been in heaven or hell for all the Master of Gray cared then. He had come to his love. Their hands met and clung together. Their eyes kissed. For once Sidney was but chorus to a play, and the novelty of it pleased him. He saw Lady Kinaldie's glance go seeking the Master of Gray—saw it find him—saw her cheeks grow white ere she drew back into the shadow. And quickly and ashamed he turned away.

Just then through the doorway Logan came lounging. The Laird of Restalrig was sober. Nevertheless, he had drunk enough to produce a philosophical temper. He philosophised.

"The fact is," thought Logan, "she is all clothes." He referred to her Majesty Queen Elizabeth. "She offends the eye. It is the duty of a woman to be flesh and blood. Now our poor Mary—" he chuckled solemnly—"is. Wherefore, she is to be deserted—it is the duty of men." He saw Lady Kinaldie. "Our slighted beauty! *Ventre du Pape*, she—she consoles herself with—with Robin Ogilvy!" He chuckled again. "Here is a compliment for Patrick! To decline upon that small beer! And where is Patrick? Patrick worships the beautiful eyes of mademoiselle. Ho, ho! It appears that mademoiselle also worships the beautiful eyes of Patrick. She has not heard of Madame la Patissière. Nor of madame—— Oh, Patrick!" He enjoyed himself amid memories of the past. All on a sudden the jovial face grew grave. The heavy black eyebrows came down. He leant forward peering through the crowd. "That corpse face—again! Talking with Mauvissière —Mauvissière is ambassador from France—that face —that face—I have it!—I have it! The rogue Patrick threw in the kennel. Oho, oho!" He began to push clumsily forward through the crowd. Not adroit, but vigorous, he made headway and enemies. It appeared to him necessary that the Master of Gray should be aware of the presence of M. de Biran.

But her Majesty had become aware that a lady was

being honoured with the attention of the Master of Gray, and at once she required his presence. The Master smiling sweetly and devising strange oaths approached Diana. On the way he passed Ogilvy and found excuse in the closeness of the throng to stop an instant.

"Have a care, Robin, have a care," he whispered. He looked at Lady Kinaldie and smiled and bowed. She took no heed at all. "Ah! beware of our lady of Babylon!" said the Master of Gray, carefully that the lady might hear. In a moment he was paying compliment to Diana. Ogilvy turned again to the lady, their eyes met, and he stammered:—

"Forgive me——"

"What, sir? It appears I detain you." She made him a curtsey. He flushed.

"Ah, madame, indeed——"

"At least you detain me," said Lady Kinaldie, and turned her back on the hapless Ogilvy.

Logan chuckled. Logan saw her draw back to a seat by the wall, and there, her chin on her hand, she sat, and her gaze was steady on May Cobham, who spoke a little with this man and that, but ever her eyes wandered to the Master of Gray. Logan stood very big and quite useless watching Lady Kinaldie's beautiful white face; she sat still, but he saw the white bosom heaving. At last she sprang up and looked round. Through the crowd M. de Biran came wriggling. He smiled and looked up into her eyes, and she laid her hand on his arm. They went out, and Logan was left to mutter oaths. He confounded

the beautiful eyes of mademoiselle, who was not to the taste of the Laird of Restalrig.

"Ah, my lady, what honour!" said Biran, pressing her hand against his side. Lady Kinaldie laughed strangely. They went down the great staircase and across the quadrangle to Sir James Crofts' lodging. In a little panelled room she drew her hand from his arm and at once he knelt and caught it and kissed it. She laughed again.

"Sit!" she said, pointing to a chair. M. de Biran sat. She paced to and fro a moment, and then sat by the window, her chin on her hand, looking out into the silver moonlight. M. de Biran had time to admire the beauty of the round white throat and arm and the black curls falling low. M. de Biran admired with the greedy eyes of desire.

"M. de Biran!" Her voice was faint; the tortured eyes were turned away from his. "M. de Biran—the Master of Gray is not true. I—was deceived." Biran laughed.

"You know it a little late, madame. *Dame*—why all the world has known it six months past. Gray,"—his little features drew together—"Gray? to whom was the scoundrel ever true? Not even to you, lady" —he drew his chair nearer and touched her bare arm —"not even—to you." She shrank away.

"Enough that I know it now, sir!" she cried fiercely. She turned to him and her eyes were blazing and a spot of colour glowed on either cheek. "Ay, and I can tell you more than you know, my friend. 'Twas he that ruined Arran—oh, yes, you

know that—you do not know how. Arran sent this Queen jewels, and among them Gray hid a poisoned ring and made her believe that it came from Arran."

"A poisoned ring?" cried Biran. He beheld his own handiwork.

"Ay, and now he is selling Mary's secrets to them." She drew closer to him. "Ay—that and something more—he is very close with Walsingham—something I fear—I do not know. Crofts does not know——" She paused panting. M. de Biran smiled.

"More? There is no need of more . . ." His hand began to play with his dagger hilt. "Father Edmund said, at the last—at the last." He drew his dagger half out of the sheath, let the light shine on it and eyed it lovingly. He laughed aloud. "Enough, M. de Gray, enough," he said, and pushed the dagger home. M. de Biran, the warrior, stood up. "Madame, you shall be avenged!" he cried fiercely. But she had grown pale once more and the light had gone from her eyes. "I kiss your hands and I go!" cried M. de Biran, but she drew her hands to her bosom.

"No! No!" she muttered. Biran frowned and glared at her.

"*Notre Dame de Fayette!*" It was M. de Biran's great oath. "You shall not save him! You shall not cheat me again! You shall not, I say!" His voice rose shrill.

"Philippe—" her hand caught his—"Philippe, you have said that you loved me." He turned and looked down at the white bosom and his eyes grew greedy.

"Loved you? Loved you? Ah, Marie, my life,

my angel—" he caught her hands—"let him go, the brute, the traitor, and I will teach you love!" At that she laughed. Her hands lay in his quite cold.

"Who loves obeys, M. de Biran." She rose and looked down calm and beautiful at the little man, and she spoke very quietly. "Death? No, that is too good, sir. Listen: you shall go to the father of this English girl and tell him all. Tell him how Gray went to spy on him of his own will. Tell how he has been always false. Tell of the poisoned ring and his tricks and his lies and his treachery. Yes, tell him, and then . . . see how his English love will honour him." Awhile they looked at each other, distrustful. Then M. de Biran's eyes grew cunning.

"Yes, I will tell him, certainly I will tell him," he said.

"Of your kindness," she answered. He drew her to him.

"Ah, madame, and I? Am I to serve always for nothing — nothing but the touch of your hand? Never more, and I have served you many a year, and I am sick with longing, never a kiss on your lips——"

"You may have it," she said quickly ere he could ask for more. He took her in his arms and kissed her fiercely many times. She lay on his breast unresisting, cold.

## CHAPTER XXI.

### MONSIEUR DE BIRAN *S'AMUSE.*

"EH, monsieur, I admire your country—your Queen—infinitely—your statesmen," the little shoulders went up to the ears, "them I do not understand. Truly I am French, and your English ways they are strange. But I ask my friends at the Embassy, who have been with you many years, and they also do not understand." Frank Somers laughed.

"Why, we are English and blunt, and your French ways are too fine for us." M. de Biran flung up his hands and appealed to heaven.

"Blunt! Ah, monsieur, if this it is to be blunt, give me the finesse of Machiavelli himself."

"I do not understand," said Frank.

"Ah, ah, monsieur, you also are English!" and Frank was given a sly look from the little brown eyes. He was quite puzzled.

"Oh, plague take it! say what you mean, or do not expect me to understand, monsieur."

They walked on in the meadows a little way while M. de Biran regretted the English mind.

"*Dame!* monsieur, it is quite simple. What? I suppose we are not all saints in France, and yet—the ways of my Lord Burghley and the Sieur de

Walsingham—" up went his shoulders—"well, I wonder, that is all." Frank flushed.

"At least we do not keep the feast of St. Bartholomew!" he said sharply.

"The Bartholomew? No, you will have no war, no battles," cried M. de Biran, who had fought in that fair fight. He lost his temper. "No, you will use other paths—spies, chicane, treachery." Frank raised his hand. M. de Biran started back, and Frank let his hand fall, and laughed.

"Monsieur, you are of the Embassy—the guest of my mistress. It is well for you," and he turned away. Biran caught his arm.

"Ah, monsieur, I have offended—your pardon. Indeed, I pray your pardon." Frank bowed stiffly and stood erect staring at him. "But consider, monsieur, I am new to your court. I come and I find high in honour and favour men whose hand I would not take, whom no gentleman in France would meet, men like the Master of Gray!"

"The Master of Gray?" said Frank in amazement.

"Yes!—that noble Paladin, the Master of Gray. That common spy, traitor to every cause, taking the pay of all, he, so please you, stands high among those whom your court honours. *Dame!* none of us are saints, all of us may use such scoundrels, but hold them in favour, fondle them—no, that is reserved for England!"

"The Master of Gray has done good service, monsieur," said Frank, striving against his will to be

loyal. Biran caught the lack of faith in the tone and laughed.

"Good service? Oh, yes! To you to-day, to-morrow to Spain. Well, you are content, and 'tis your affair. God give you joy of him!"

Frank was torn between two opinions. It was base to listen: it was madness to take no heed. So he sought to salve his conscience and said:—

"Monsieur, the Master of Gray once saved my life." M. de Biran made a mistake.

"Ah, you were at Amiens!" he cried; and then seeing Frank's wondering stare he remembered.

"Yes, at Amiens," said Frank. "How did you know?" M. de Biran spread out his hands.

"How do I know? Eh, monsieur, how does all the world know? Because the scoundrel boasts of the fool Englishman who blundered into a Guisard trap and was saved by the prowess of the Master of Gray." M. de Biran laughed scornfully. "Oh, monsieur, be easy! You alone do not glorify the Master of Gray. There be others—the poor Scottish Lord Arran. What? You have never heard that noble story? Hear him tell how he called himself Arran's friend so that the poor fool charged him with a gift of jewels to your Queen. And among them your good friend Gray put a poisoned ring—made your Queen think Arran plotted at her life and made her his bitter foe, so that she let loose his foes on him, and the poor fool Arran is gone and the Master of Gray the greatest man in Scotland. But of course you know nothing, you are all so innocent in England. I suppose you

trust this knave with the Spanish gold jingling in his pockets, as your dull minister trusted him in Paris. Oh, yes, he is very useful. He does you good service. Yes, he will sell you Mary's secrets, eh, monsieur, I do not doubt. He will show you the way to murder her for ten crowns. Only, monsieur, only"—he tapped Frank's arm—"it is better to remember—he will murder your own Queen for twenty." Frank stood and stared and rubbed his forehead like a man suddenly waked from sleep. M. de Biran's speech rushed on like a stream in flood, and Frank's mind was swept away. M. de Biran looked at him and smiled. "*Dame!* 'tis no affair of mine. You like this—in England. We, monsieur, we do not. For me, I like our own ways better." Frank frowned.

"Is it true?" he muttered. Monsieur de Biran's hand flew to his sword.

"Monsieur!" he cried glaring, but Frank only stared, and Biran shrugged his shoulders and put his dignity by. "Eh, it is incredible—but I suppose you did not know. My compliments, monsieur, on——"

"Somers!" cried a voice behind them. Frank turned. Nigel Vardon was hurrying towards them. "Somers! Pox on you! Somers!"

"Yes?"

"Oh, you have ears—of a kind. Well, her Majesty commands your presence."

Frank followed him back through the meadows, and M. de Biran, standing still looking after him, finished his sentence.

"——on your Protestant innocence," and the sun-

light fell on his face as he smiled. Whereby, of two men coming towards him one was moved to say suddenly:—

"So Logan was not drunk!"

"Is it strange?"

"If you knew him——" said the Master of Gray and laughed. "But faith, 'twill be time to laugh later. Sir Philip, you see that abortion?"

"At least it sees us," said Sidney, for M. de Biran, having stared with shaded eyes an instant, was giving his whole energy to departure. "And, it appears, would rather not."

"For reasons: I know him. And, Sir Philip, I fear him. Not for myself. Little harm can he do me, the ingenious Biran! But he was reared in the service of Guise, and when I saw him last he was one who aspired to the crown of martyrdom, to——"

"God!" Sidney muttered. "He has access, occasion, every day. He is of Mauvissière's suite."

"I think, if I were my Lord Burghley, I should remonstrate with M. de Mauvissière. Or else," he looked at Sidney and laughed, "one of us may have a small disagreement with M. de Biran."

"No, sir, not your sword or mine for such knaves. I will speak with Sir Francis in good time ere the snake bite."

But the snake had bitten.

## CHAPTER XXII.

### THE UNKNOWN GOD.

THE afternoon sun came streaming in through a casement with thick diamond panes that glistened and sparkled, and the broken flashes of light fell on black oak panels and tapestry pictures, whose colours had faded into one dull brown. There sat Frank Somers, alone. His elbows rested on the table, and his head was between his hands. The honest face was distorted, his under lip pale and blood-stained. He was finding life difficult.

Silently the door opened, there was a little swish of silken skirts, and May stood in the sunlight, radiant and lovely. Dainty colour darkened her cheeks now, the little mouth that ever found it hard to shut bore a gay smile, and her deep grey eyes were aglow. But the smile faded and her lips bent down.

"Why, Frank," she cried, "and are you troubled?"

Frank turned, and she saw his wan face clear in the light. He did not answer. Her hand fell tenderly on his shoulder.

"Oh, Frank! What is it? Tell me." Frank shook his head. "We have been great friends," she said softly. "Won't you tell me? I might help." Frank's honest blue eyes looked up at her, and a sad smile came on his lips.

"No, you cannot help, May," he said, and he patted her hand clumsily. "May, my dear little girl," he muttered. Suddenly she blushed, and her eyes grew misty.

"Ah, Frank—I am sorry!" she cried. "I—I did not know." Her blush grew darker and her eyes fell, but she took his hot fingers in hers and pressed them. "But, Frank, you—you must not care—much. You know you are to be a great man. You are to be at the Queen's hand, and have great work and a great place, and——" Her words rang hollow to herself, and in the midst of them he broke out laughing.

"I am never to see her again," he said sharply.

"'Never to see her again'?" she cried, her eyes wide. "Why, what have you done?" For the Queen could do no wrong. A moment she looked at him in surprise, and watched his eyes grow tender and pitiful. He took her hands in his and rose.

"May, dear, you've known——" he began, and then the door opened again and Sir Henry Cobham came in. He said nothing, but he put his arm round his daughter and drew her close. Frank looked in wonder at the grave sad face, and the girl cried:—

"Father, what is it?"

"Tell her," said Sir Henry.

"You know, sir?" Frank cried.

"I know"—he laid his hand on Frank's for a moment—"I know, boy."

"Father——?" cried the girl, but he only drew her closer and nodded to Frank to speak. Frank spoke in curt, halting phrases.

"May, the Queen summoned me. Then she—she said she had an errand for me. It was to go to Mary of Scots and tell her that we knew—knew what we did not know. To charge her with plotting invasion . . . with plotting to murder the Queen. I was to do it. To make her angry so that in her anger she should betray herself. I was to charge her with all this—saying we know it—we do not. To trap a woman——" He paused.

"Yes, to trap a woman," said Sir Henry Cobham, and he looked sadly at his daughter.

"Father—it is shameful!" the girl cried, and then on the stair without rang a gay voice.

"Sir Henry desires to see me? Faith, a pleasure for both! In there? No, my friend. In here, perhaps."

"The Master of Gray, sir," cried the lacquey. Entered the Master of Gray resplendent.

"Ah, my lady"—a bow to the floor and a tender glance from the beautiful dark eyes. "Sir Henry—Mr. Somers—at your command." Sir Henry bent his head a little. Frank Somers not even that. The Master's eyebrows went up, he smiled an indulgent smile. May slipped from her father's arm and ran to him.

"Ah, sir, you can help us!" He took the hands she held out and kissed them.

"With all I have, lady." The two Englishmen looked at each other as they stood stiffly aloof. "'Tis far less than your due." She smiled at him. "And how may I serve?"

"The Queen is ill-pleased with Frank." The

Master seemed suddenly to remember something. "And you she trusts: so if you would speak for him——"

"God's death! No!" cried Frank hoarsely, springing forward. "Not you!" May started back, and the Master of Gray mechanically stepped between her and the angry dishevelled man who shouted at him.

"Sir, if I can serve you, believe me, none does it with better will," he said, bowing a little.

"You!" cried Frank. His hand was clenched and his arm trembled. Sir Henry, stepping forward, laid a hand on his shoulder. "You planned the whole cursed plot!"

"Ah, no!" the girl cried. She clung to Gray's arm. "No, it is not true!" Her eyes were pleading.

"That I have been false to you, love, is not true, will never be," he whispered. Then, smiling, he turned to Frank. "It appears that you have a charge to make. I am grateful that you make it before me. But, pardon my slow wit, what is it?"

"It is this," said Sir Henry quickly, ere Frank could speak. "You, sir, urged her Majesty to send one to Mary of Scots who should charge her falsely with crime. Will you deny it?"

The Master of Gray laughed.

"Deny it?—no!" May drew a long shuddering breath and fell back against the wall. Turning a little towards her he spoke. "You put it a little bluntly, Sir Henry. My counsel, given in good faith, was no more than this: send some one well-

skilled in state-craft—" his eye twinkled as he looked at Frank—"to charge her with what we do not know to be true that we may learn if it is. Deny that? And why? Your Queen, ensample of high virtue, liked it well. Sir Francis Walsingham chose that plan to follow, he grown old in state-craft, knowing the world's ways all. Faith, I am proud they honoured me enough to use my device." Smiling he looked round; but he saw pain and wonder on his love's pale face and biting scorn in Sir Henry's eyes. The Master of Gray was surprised.

"You see no shame to trap a woman by lies whom once you served, to sell her secrets, to betray her?" said Sir Henry.

"Shame, lies, treachery?" cried the Master, and he laughed. "Do we live in heaven? Shall we turn the other cheek to our bitter foes? Shall we lie down crying 'kill me, so please you'? *Mordieu*, sir, are you so safe? Strange rumours are come from Spain of late. Perhaps you would have an Armada on the coast while your Queen lies dead. Faith, fight fair with those who shrink from nothing and so you are like to end. Do you march with ban and arrière-ban on the snake in the grass? No, you trap him. So then do I! Is it a trick? Oh, ay, 'tis not of things lovely and of good report. Well, is it lovely to slay your Queen with a poisoned ring?"

"The poisoned ring? Ah, we know that lie!" cried Frank scornfully.

"It appears you know much. So safe is your Queen that it matters nothing what Mary does or

Guise or Spain. *Dame*, no! England is a happy isle that all the world loves dearly. No foes has your Queen. No, there is no Spain, no Mary, no plots, no assassins—not even a ring. Into the pure heart of Guise no ill design ever——"

"No, 'twas your own! Your own cursed plan to ruin Arran and steal his place!" And now the Master of Gray grew pale. Frank thundered on: "Yes, you put the ring among his jewels, you, his friend, and you made the Queen believe it came from him. Will you deny that—or was that for England's sake?"

One glance the Master gave at his love's face, white against the black panels, saw in the wide eyes nothing but shame and horror, and turned again to meet his foes. But now he spoke for her.

"Yes, that too," he said, and the musical voice fell low. "You scorn me, you call me liar and traitor. Ay, and thereby I have done for your England what you would not do. Arran was a traitor—ah, you laugh —ask my Lord Burghley then, or Walsingham. He worked to ruin the Queen and she trusted him blindly. For her own life's sake I had to bring her to cast him out. Well, I found a way. A treacherous way, a way through lies and fraud. Yes. I made myself traitor, liar, cheat. And for what? For your cause, at the last, for your cause. I swore to be true to England. True I have been. I have taken shame that you, Englishmen born, would not brook. I promised my life, my honour, to you. Eh! I have given them both." There was a moment's

silence, and again the Master of Gray looked at his love. She hid her face in her hands.

"Did we ask your honour?" said Sir Henry Cobham, and at his voice Gray turned like a horse under the whip. "You have told us what you are. To tell us earlier had been kind." He went to the door and opened it, but the Master of Gray fell on his knees beside the girl. Frank was starting forward to seize him when Sir Henry held up his hand. Gray caught her dress and pled with uplifted hands; she hid her face from the dark piteous eyes.

"Ah, lady," he said, "to your cause I gave myself, body and soul. For that I have borne danger and shame, and I bear it light, love, since 'twas for you. Ah, May, 'twas for our love's sake, and I have given all to love—all, for our love, dear, yours and mine." She drew a long breath, and her hands fell from her hot face. She shrank away from him, shuddering.

"Love? To lie, cheat, betray! Ah, your love!" she cried, and her cheeks flushed darker and she hid her shamed eyes again. She sobbed, and the Master of Gray gazed at her white and wild-eyed. Sir Henry Cobham's voice came harsh and cold:—

"Sir, you have your answer."

"May!" cried the Master madly, catching the hem of her dress.

"God—God forgive you," she sobbed. And then the Master of Gray rose and laughed loud.

"God!" he cried.

"You do not know Him?" said Sir Henry Cobham.

The Master stared at him, and laughed again and went out. At once Sir Henry came to his daughter, but she shrank from him and ran away. Left alone, the two men looked at each other, and Sir Henry held out his hand.

"I am sorry, Frank," he said.

"Curse him," Frank muttered. "God curse him!" Fierce anger flashed in his eyes.

"I think He has," said Sir Henry, and his eyes were pitiful.

## CHAPTER XXIII.

### THE PATRICIAN ETHICS.

"Hey, nonny no!
Is 't not fine to swim in wine
And turn upon the toe,
And sing hey, nonny no?"

So Logan roared genially to the music of a clattering wine-cup, while on the other side the wall Patrick, Master of Gray, meditated upon the theory and practice of ethics.

Sorrow beset him and bewilderment. Smitten in the past by no deeper wound than the desire of the flesh, suddenly on that summer night in Paris love had come to him and claimed his service. He had given it, and for that love scorned him. The world at last became incomprehensible. Incomprehensible: he had done wrong—wrong, yes, and he smiled a little—for her sake. What more could the heart of woman desire? And he saw again her shamed eyes and the blood dark in her cheeks, and bit his lip.

It appeared that she had desired something more. He shrugged his shoulders and came near to sneering. Yet, like the devils, he believed and trembled: he knew that the girl who had lain in his arms was purer —at that effort of thought he laughed aloud—was

purer, was nobler, compact of finer elements than he. From her some divine breath—

> Concretam exemit labem purumque reliquit
> Aetherium sensum atque aurai simplicis ignem.

He knew it and bowed before her. Nevertheless, the world was incomprehensible.

She had pledged him to her cause. It was sure that she desired for that cause victory. Even she in her purity must confess that victory could not be for her without disaster to her foes. He had prepared disaster. Why then did she plunge into tears and shame? His clever imaginative brain sought in vain for an answer till he found himself muttering in anger:—

"*Mordieu*, what would she have?"

Of course he had lied, played traitor. How else were victories won? Since it was for her, why, in her own God's name, should she complain? Moral indignation might well be spared for her foes. In heaven or on earth no power bade a man tie his hands ere he went into the fight. His honour was pledged to her, and he could not suffer her friends to go to ruin when a timely treason of his would save them. What would she think of a man who did? It appeared—he remembered her pleading for Frank—it appeared she would honour him. The Master of Gray beheld morality run mad.

A moment the thought of Frank brought a bitterer pain. For a moment he saw in Frank the cause of these hysterical ethics. Mademoiselle had two strings to her bow. Then in a reflux of shame he cursed

himself for the thought. The girl who had lain on his breast in the garden, who had put up her little mouth to kiss him—she had loved him and him alone. And he had lost her. He had staked all on victory and lost. It was true and incomprehensible. Also it was the final sentence on his deeds; failure was always condemnation to the Master of Gray. He had lost her. What use in racking his brain?

He broke out laughing.

The sound brought in Logan, ruddy and jovial.

"What, Patrick? found your temper? Give God the glory! What is the jest?"

"Nothing," said the Master of Gray, looking straight before him.

"Nothing? *Ventre du Pape*, you came in with a face red enough for—for Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, and I am fool kind and give you the bottle, and, you drop it, you infidel, and send me to hell. Why? For nothing! Now you laugh like a priest at a girl's confession. And why? For nothing! Death and the devil, what is it, man?"

"Nothing," said the Master of Gray. Logan looked at him.

"The fact is, Patrick, there has been too much of mademoiselle," he said sagely. He sat himself down on the bed and it creaked. The Master went to the window. "Now, Patrick," said Logan, swinging his legs, "listen to the words of the preacher, the son of David, Laird in Restalrig. Arise the beautiful eyes of mademoiselle—" Gray turned on him with an oath —"Patrick, you would offend her pure ears! Fare-

well to Holy Church, farewell to poor Mary, farewell also to Lady Kinaldie. Then so be it. I care not the price of a bottle! Now, Patrick, mademoiselle rebukes you, and, if you were not looking at her like a calf at his mother always, you might have known why. Aha, Patrick awakes! Lady Kinaldie beholds you worshipping mademoiselle. Your idolatry distresses her Christian faith—and so, Patrick, dear, she takes M. de Biran for a little conversation. The next day the little man is seen with that fool Englishman whom we pulled out of the fire (more foolishness) at Amiens. Lady Kinaldie told Biran—what? Biran told the Englishman. The Englishman told mademoiselle—what? I have been thinking, Patrick, perhaps you have heard what the Englishman brought from Biran to mademoiselle, and found it disagree with you damnably."

"It could only be the ring," Gray muttered, half to himself. Logan chuckled.

"The ring? So mademoiselle did not like the ring? Curse me, and yet that was innocent—for you, Patrick, my dear. The fact is," he said solemnly, "the fact is, Patrick, you are disconcerting to a saint. They are desperate difficult, Patrick, and you have such a cursed lot to explain. Why in hell you were not content with the Kinaldie woman your own fool's head may tell." He chuckled suddenly. "Ah, and on whom d'ye think she has declined, *faute de mieux?* Our good Robin! Poor girl, I guess he is devilish tiresome. There is but one thing—he may be instructive, a little too instructive, eh, Patrick?"

"Curse the woman!" said Gray.

"Which?" said Logan, and Gray glared at him. "Oh, what would you? You make one enemy—enemy she is. You make the other friend—and what is she, eh, Patrick?" Then Gray laughed.

"Nothing," said he. "Be easy, Robert, there is no more of mademoiselle."

"Then have a drink," cried Logan, and went for the bottle. And the Master of Gray hid his face in his hands. "Here, Patrick," cried Logan, filling the glasses, "here is damnation to mademoiselle!"

"Go to the devil!" Gray cried, knocking the glass from his lips: the Laird of Restalrig choked. "Happiness to her—drink it, curse you!" he cried, and Logan wondering at the white face and the blazing eyes drank it without a word. The Master of Gray drained his glass and flung it down on the floor. "Happiness and farewell!" he said, and he laughed.

"I will have another glass to that," said Logan, and had it. "Now, Patrick, for our skin's sake, what of Robin?"

"Where is the fool?"

"Dancing round her like a bear by the bear ward at this pedant court."

"Let us muzzle him," said Gray, and turned to adorn himself.

Broken troth, lost love, a girl's small tragedy, troubled not those who sat in the seats of the mighty. Enthroned magnificent between Hatton and Raleigh her Majesty remembered no more of Frank Somers

than that he was in disgrace. She had resolved to forget why. Since a gentleman was pleased to scorn this little plan it should be ill for him—but it might be wiser to speak of it no more. So Sir Francis Walsingham had hinted. Gravely, thereafter, he had heard Sir Henry Cobham's grave story of how the Master of Gray had contrived to ruin Arran. Gravely he deplored the iniquity of the Master of Gray. Her Majesty, he said, would (when she heard it) be angry. Gravely, too, he regretted that her Majesty had accepted Gray's base scheme to accuse Mary of plots unproven. It was sad—he hoped her Majesty might come to another mind—for Frank Somers he would do what he could—he was Sir Henry Cobham's faithful brother. And yet her Majesty never came to hear of the trick of the poisoned ring, though her Majesty came speedily to another mind, and sought no more to send a man on Frank's errand. So Mary was never warned against the one unpardonable sin ere the trap was laid to catch her. Sir Francis made all things work together for good. Meeting the Master of Gray that night Sir Francis greeted him heartily, and remarked in Latin that M. de Biran should receive his attention. It appeared that Sir Francis had studied in the Patrician ethics.

Free of Sir Francis, Gray looked round for the instructive Robin. Robin was piebald. One leg was golden, the other blue. The back of him was blue and the front was gold.

"Curse me," said Logan, who had been active at

dice, "curse me, if I know where he finds the money."

Robin hovered about Lady Kinaldie, one of many whom the Master of Gray viciously likened to flies.

"Fetch the fool," he said to Logan. And Logan in his own peculiar fashion ploughed through the throng. Gray lounged to the door. He saw without amusement Robin jump as the Laird of Restalrig laid hold of him, saw the moment's parley ere Robin turned under the impulse of that vigorous hand. He could guess Lady Kinaldie's jibe that set her congregation laughing and looking after the two, and then the culprit was brought to him.

"Robin, you distress us."

"Damnably," said Logan.

"A man," said Ogilvy blushing, and curling his moustache, "may amuse himself, sir."

"Irrelevant, Robin," said Logan.

"Logan!" cried Ogilvy quite fiercely.

"My dear child," said Logan amiably.

"Robin, you are a fool." The Master linked his arm in Robin's, and between the two he was led out to the staircase. Even there were many lounging and chatting, so they went down to the foot of the stairs. "Robin, you are a fool."

"Let us hear Patrick upon continence," cried Logan, and composed himself by the wall to listen. "Oh—servant, sir!" He had pushed some one out of the way, and the man bowed stiffly. It was Nigel Vardon, and his companion was Frank Somers.

"Now, Robin, to amuse yourself—it is well enough.

With this woman you will not amuse yourself—only her. I know. While you are useful you may have her dear love, her kisses, her—well, Robin, you understand," said the Master of Gray, who understood Robin. Robin laughed in the way of a fool. "I say it; I have had the honour to love this pure maid. But it will be while you are useful and no longer. And Master Robin can be useful in one way—by betraying me."

"Sir——"

"Oh, la, la, la. You are Nestor already, we know. But Robin, you are not Galahad. You will have your little will, and in the lady's kind arms, Robin, there will be much told of my poor ways. What, Robin, do I not know? I have been her cavalier—and do I grudge you what I leave? While I served her I might have my will. So may any man—wondrous company I guess that room has seen already." He pointed vaguely out into the quadrangle. "You, me—why, who can tell? To-morrow, the fool Somers, if it serves her!" He laughed harshly, as he thought of another than Lady Kinaldie. "Scarlet, Robin, scarlet. Come, man, she will throw you off when your work is done like me, or——"

A man trod heavily on his foot.

"Curse your clumsiness!" was cried in his face, and he was flung aside, and as he staggered he saw in the moonlight the face of Frank Somers. Logan sprang in and pulled Somers backwards.

"Curse your clumsy self!" he roared. The throng on the stairs turned wondering.

"Logan, my affair," said the Master of Gray. "If I discomposed you, Mr. Somers, I regret it," he said, and he bowed. For he understood.

"Regret it, sir!" cried Somers, very red. "I say, curse your clumsiness. Must you push your foul body among gentlemen? I say, curse your clumsiness. Do you understand?" He drew closer till his breath fell on Gray's cheek. Then a light hand touched his arm.

"Pray, Mr. Somers, let us have no brawling while the Queen is near," said Sir Philip Sidney.

"Brawl, Sir Philip?" cried Frank. "I say that fellow with his cursed clumsiness tripped me. Does the knave understand?"

"Mr. Somers, believe me——"

"Your pardon, Sir Philip. Mr. Somers, I do understand. Sir Philip, will you favour us one moment without?" They passed away from the gaping audience. "Sir Philip, I was so unfortunate as to have my foot in the way of Mr. Somers, but I think that is not the cause of his anger—which, believe me, Mr. Somers, I confess justified if you had been right. When I give my assurance to Sir Philip Sidney that what I was saying—not to you, but unhappily in your hearing—of a lady was said of no lady whom you know, I think that he will accept it——"

"I do, sir," said Sir Philip. "Mr. Somers, my friend is incapable as you or I of saying anything unworthy of any lady of honour." Frank laughed.

"Sir Philip, you do not know him. I do!"

"Mr. Somers, I have had the honour to give you my word," said Sir Philip very quietly.

"God knows, I mean no disrespect to you, Sir Philip," cried poor Frank. "But you—" he turned upon Gray—"you spoke of me and—and the lady." The Master thought for a moment.

"It is true, and I regret it. Of you I spoke as the man most alien to a lady who might yet receive her favours if it appeared to her profit. That accords with your memory? You will see that it could not accord with that other lady whom I honour no less than you."

"You——" said Frank fiercely, and checked himself. "Then, who was your lady?"

"Indeed, Mr. Somers, indeed, that question cannot be answered," cried Sir Philip. "I wonder that it was asked." The Master of Gray perceived a disadvantage in Sir Philip's aid, but:—

"That, Mr. Somers, I cannot tell you," he said. Frank laughed in his face.

"Cannot? No lie ready? Bah, 'tis all lies!" and he struck Gray across the eyes.

"That is enough," said the Master of Gray quietly.

"Sir, I shall be proud if I may serve you," cried Sir Philip. "And suffer me to tell you, Mr. Somers, that your conduct has been unworthy—unworthy, if you understand."

"God knows, 'tis not!" cried Frank. "Sir Philip, if you knew——"

"I think that I know enough, sir. The name of your friend?"

"Vardon will serve me," said Frank, and Sir Philip with the smallest of bows turned on his heel and took the arm of the Master of Gray.

"Sir, you must not think that we cherish at court here many such boors as that," said Sidney. But Gray laughed a little.

"Nay, Sir Philip, he was in the right." Sidney started. "Ah, so also was I. I was not speaking of his love—a lady, God knows, worthy all honour. But to-day we have been much wrought, he and I, for that lady's sake. And I have lost. What I said of another—well, 'twas much like the railings of a beaten lover. . . ." Sidney's grasp of his arm grew closer. "Ah, and she will hear that I spoke of her foully," he cried, and looked round at Sidney with a strange sneering smile. "'Tis a happy world, Sir Philip!"

"Sir, if I might clear you of that charge with your lady I should hold myself happy." Gray shook his head.

"Thanks for that and for all—but 'tis better so. First I will meet Mr. Somers." His voice rang sharp.

"Indeed, you are much wronged, sir; but you have yourself excused him—you will not——"

"I shall do nothing unworthy the friend of Sir Philip Sidney. I think I can give no better pledge."

"It was not needed," said Sidney. And they walked on in silence, the linked arms pressing close. "Well, I must see this foolish gentleman's friend, Patrick. God keep you!"

Gray wrung his hand and walked slowly back to his inn. He found Robin Ogilvy engaged in the more moral amusement of dice play.

"Well, Patrick?" cried Logan.

"We fight," said the Master of Gray.

"Poor devil!" said the Laird of Restalrig.

## CHAPTER XXIV.

### *LE BAYARD DE NOS JOURS.*

THE meadow was spangled with buttercups and white fritillaries that swayed a little in the sweet morning breeze. Inside the city wall a score of chapel bells were clamorous. Just out of range of the shadow of the elms Sidney and Vardon measured swords, and Frank Somers stripped off his coat. Sir Philip Sidney's friend would fight with single sword. Nigel Vardon gave thanks to heaven: he had feared the double rapier play or sword and dagger, whereof Frank Somers was innocent as a maid.

In a moment the two were placed, the slim lithe figure over against Frank's heavy strength. Sidney gave the word. Frank drew back. He remembered —had remembered all night long—how the Master of Gray dashed into the fight at Amiens. It appeared that the Master had no mind to dash into the fight now. He stood quite still, waiting. Flushing, Frank came fiercely to the attack. His blade was beaten out of line at once, and the Master had an easy prey. He stood quietly on guard. Sidney found Vardon looking at him. Frank recovered, and the blades joined again. Followed more attacks, less wild, no less easily put aside. Frank fought doggedly on, wondering and half-ashamed. He remembered

the fight at Amiens, he remembered Gray's easy mastery, and saw his point at Verdun's heart. He knew well enough that now as then the Master of Gray might have killed his man. Do as he would, that easy wrist put his thrusts by. He could not pass the quick flickering blade, though attack was his only care. He had no need to defend. He looked into the dull, listless dark eyes, the calm white face, and shame grew upon him.

The chapel bells were silent. Only the rattle of sword-play sounded across the meadow. A sharp parry beat Frank's blade aside, and this time Gray's arm shot out in riposte. But ere the point came home it was checked suddenly and drawn back. Frank sprang away dropping his point.

"At your pleasure," said the Master of Gray coldly.

Frank came on again. Now there was heart on neither side. Feeble thrust met careless parry. Sidney and Vardon looked at each other. In a moment the blades were locked. Gray let his hand rest, and his eyes asked Frank an unspoken question. But Frank, wrenching his blade free, lunged. Gray turned a little and let the point run unparried through his sword-arm.

"Strike up, Nigel!" cried Sidney, and the blades went flashing to the sky.

"Frank, you are satisfied?" muttered Vardon, anxious and ashamed.

"Ay," said poor Frank, looking at the blood on Gray's arm. Vardon turned hastily to bind it up. Sidney stood still, staring contemptuous at Frank.

"Sir Philip, Mr. Somers is satisfied," said Vardon, whipping out a kerchief. Sidney looked at the Master and was answered by a bow.

"Mr. Somers surprises me," said Sidney, sneering. "Mr. Somers—suffer me to tell you—what I said of your action last night you have kindly proved true this morning. I shall have the honour to say it again, Mr. Somers." Frank blushed and looked at the ground. By some miracle of ill hap he was ever in the wrong with the Master of Gray. Sidney laughed at him. But the Master put out his left hand and touched Sidney's arm.

"No, Philip, so please you. You will say to my friends and your own that in this, as in all other affairs that I have had with Mr. Somers, he has borne himself truly and honourably, without reproach." A moment Sidney stared at him in silence, then he bowed.

"Mr. Somers, you have heard my friend. Now it becomes my duty to ask your pardon," he said, not over heartily.

"Is no need, Sir Philip," muttered Frank. Thicker and thicker grew the fog about him. He stared at Gray, who was looking at his wound. Frank Somers also struggled with an incomprehensible world. He had ruined Gray's hopes of love, and Gray, who cared little for men's lives, might have killed him a dozen times that morning and had held his hand. More—Gray by mere silence might have let Sidney drive him from the company of gentlemen. And Gray had saved him—Gray whom he hated, who must hate

him. Suddenly the Master of Gray, having given him time to think of this, looked up and smiled at him.

"Mr. Somers, if we may not be friends—for that you will scarce grant me—at least let us part without malice for this morning's work," and he bowed.

"I do, sir," Frank muttered. Vardon finished the bandage.

"Mr. Vardon, I am much your debtor. Gentlemen both, your servant." He bowed, and Vardon and Frank went off together, the hapless Frank to hear a lecture on his gross and ungallant conduct in wounding so noble a gentleman, the friend of Philip Sidney.

Sidney was helping the noble gentleman into his coat.

"'Tis not painful, Patrick, I hope? Bah, a foul thrust as ever I saw——"

"Faith, no. I asked for it. He would not be pacified without blood. I could have parried, of course. It was better so."

"But you had spared him six times over!" Gray shrugged his shoulders and laughed.

"Was it hard? Why kill him? The man was honest. Oh, Philip, 'tis no great matter, and I no Bayard. He thought I had blasphemed the lady I love. Am I he who should complain of anger at that? Is it strange, so strange, that I am merciful?" Sidney made him a sling for the arm.

"Strange?" he said, shifting it a little, tenderly. "Why, Patrick, I do not know." Their eyes met, and Sidney's voice fell low. "To spare him who says

that you blasphemed your love—because he is her friend—'tis not all men could do it, Patrick." He smiled. "Indeed, I think you are Bayard enough for me. *Le Bayard de nos jours.*" The Master of Gray laughed a strange, scornful laugh. "Patrick, can I aid you?" said Sidney softly.

"Not even you," muttered Gray.

## CHAPTER XXV.

### MONSIEUR DE BIRAN *S'ENNUIE.*

"Go with you? Oh, Monsieur de Biran, you do me too much honour!" cried Lady Kinaldie, and laughed at him. Monsieur's olive face grew darker.

"You laugh at me?" he snarled. Lady Kinaldie took up her lute and began to tune it. The discords did not gratify M. de Biran. He eyed her for a moment, then fell on his knee and caught her hand—whereby the lute twanged loud. The lady sprang up.

"The lute protests, monsieur—and I also. M. de Biran, your time is short, and there must be many yearning, as I am, to bid you farewell."

"Ah, Marie," monsieur pleaded, "come with me! Let us say farewell no more——"

"So we say it now, monsieur," the lady laughed, "I care little whether we say it again."

"Have I not loved you, have I not done your work, have I not——"

"You have deafened me already. Nay, monsieur, you harass yourself in vain. I wish you all good fortune and farewell."

"Marie, I love you!"

"It is unfortunate. I shall try to forgive you." She looked down at the little man and laughed: but

she was trying to cure a madman. "Adieu, monsieur." She held out her hand.

"You can bid me go?" cried monsieur.

"Indeed, I thought that I had," said the lady. M. de Biran clapped on his hat and made a dramatic departure. "The poor little man," said Lady Kinaldie compassionately. But that M. de Biran was spared.

So not even to M. de Biran was fate kind. But an hour before M. de Mauvissière had informed him politely but clearly that a week must see the end of M. de Biran's visit to England. M. de Biran entreated: M. de Mauvissière regretted. M. de Biran stormed: M. de Mauvissière rang the bell. M. de Biran protested that he would not go: M. de Mauvissière suggested that he would go at once or never. M. de Biran retired.

M. de Mauvissière had not the smallest intention of quarrelling with Walsingham on behalf of M. de Biran. So on Sir Francis Walsingham expressing his grief that the minister of a friendly realm should entertain one whose ill purposes were known (a word emphasised)—his surprise that the ambassador of the King of France had by his side a creature of the Holy League—M. de Mauvissière agreed with his adversary while he was in the way, and having discovered to his amazement that Sir Francis spoke of M. de Biran, expressed his horror, and undertook to deal shortly with monsieur.

"Let us say a week," said Walsingham; "and afterwards——" His eyes glittered.

"I shall," said M. de Mauvissière, "take no interest in monsieur—afterwards."

Neither M. de Mauvissière nor his master Henri III. desired that Elizabeth should give place to Mary —for both philosophically preferred the ills they knew. That Elizabeth should be free of all danger—that was another matter, a state calculated to produce a froward and haughty spirit. Accordingly, to encourage the Messieurs de Biran up to a point, to wonder at their infamous audacity a little later, was the politic of M. de Mauvissière. Admirable, no doubt, in the abstract, advantageous, too, to the harassed Henri III., it bore somewhat hardly upon M. de Biran.

M. de Biran was much displeased. It appeared to him that he had been fooled. Lady Kinaldie had employed him to sever Gray from his English love and leave him free for her to conquer. *En revanche*, the Master of Gray (M. de Biran had no doubt of it) procured the expulsion of Biran. It appeared that M. de Biran had benevolently achieved that which he most feared and loathed—the success of Lady Kinaldie's quest for the Master of Gray. Also—and always he remembered this—he had done nothing, or perhaps worse than nothing, for his faith and his Church.

Reflecting on this happy consummation, M. de Biran went heavily homeward from Lady Kinaldie. M. de Biran desired vehemently to revenge his shattered dignity. There was of course the old obvious way — and while he reflected upon it, a benevolent fate put before him another.

He caught up Frank Somers. His little eyes glanced sideways and saw a face gloomy and distraught. M. de Biran remembered—it was common talk in the court—that her Majesty had quarrelled with Frank.

"Ah, monsieur, your servant," cried M. de Biran, and smiled.

"Servant," Frank muttered. M. de Biran took his arm.

"Monsieur, the world goes ill with us—with you, with me. You and I, we are driven from the court—" Frank stared at him—"and why, monsieur? *Notre Dame de Fayette*, by one black traitor!"

"What do you mean?"

"Mean, monsieur? No more than this! He who has ruined your fame with the Queen, he who has ruined mine, is one—that damned traitor the Master of Gray!" Frank stared. "Yes! He hates us—you because your lady is his (ah! you know it is true!), me because I know his treachery, all his knave's heart. And he—he—is to belie us to the Queen. Shall we bear it, monsieur, shall we bear it?" And Frank said:—

"What do you mean?"

"Monsieur, he stole your love, he stole mine——"

"What?" M. de Biran had to explain.

"Stole it, monsieur," he hissed, "and threw it away. She loves him, and he scorns her, jeers her, jibes at her—is that not enough for hate? And this is the man, this English Jezebel——" Frank flung him off.

"God's wounds! foul words come of foul mouths," he cried.

Biran was back to the wall and livid.

"Will you cower before her like a dog that is whipped?"

"Dog? Dog in your teeth, for a vile lying French Papist!" Frank roared.

"Expressive, Mr. Somers," said a placid voice behind. It was Walsingham. "But I fear that monsieur may scarce have leisure to answer. Time presses with monsieur, I think?" He smiled at Biran amiably, and Biran breathing hard turned and vanished down Logic Lane. "He was making statements, Mr. Somers, or perhaps—offers?" said Walsingham.

"Curse him, he insulted the Queen!" Walsingham spread out his hands. "Sir Francis—he had told me matters—a tale of the Master of Gray——" said Frank anxiously.

"There is more than the common likelihood, Mr. Somers, that tales from that gentleman are false," said Walsingham, and passed on.

Frank, who fell deeper and deeper in bewilderment every hour, stood still and frowned and looked after him scratching his head.

So M. de Biran ended his third conversation that day with the same sad fortune. Remained the more excellent way.

Like others of his kind, M. de Biran preferred the romantic manner. He did not anticipate Anthony Babington, who, entering on conspiracy, had his

portrait taken in character as conspirator, but doubtless he would have approved that ingenuous deed, for the figure that lounged at Ship Street corner that evening, come on a most secret errand, was carefully arrayed to attract the wandering eye. That figure was cloaked from eye to heel. Its hat was tilted over its forehead. To all the world M. de Biran proclaimed that he disguised himself. Also he was furtive. He hovered in the gloom of Bocardo, he ventured into the Church porch and peered, the picture of a small bravo, round the corner of it. Whereby, as was natural, he drew upon himself, even in the twilight, the attention of the Laird of Restalrig, who stood by an opposite window swearing (for reasons) thoughtfully.

"Ho, ho!" said Logan, rubbing the glass. "Ho, ho! Robin, darling, take a look at—the devil!" The head had vanished. Ogilvy made a joke.

"I do, Restalrig," said he, surveying that gentleman.

Logan achieved an irrelevant oath and ran out. Ogilvy from the window saw and heard him go roaring across the street—

> "Let back and side go bare, go bare,
> Let hand and foot go cold——"

So he chanted as he lurched across the Cornmarket. Ogilvy turned up his cultivated nose. On went Logan, his hat on the back of his head, his elbows thrust out.

"'But, belly, send thee good ale enough'—hold up, hold up, rascal, sot!" Full upon M. de Biran he

charged, and down went monsieur before him, and they both rolled and wriggled cursing on the stones. Logan was on top.

"Curse me," said Logan, arising by the aid of M. de Biran's stomach, causing M. de Biran to arise by means of his throat. "Curse me, you are the little dagger man!" M. de Biran, despite the hand at his throat, groaned. "Now, do not make that noise! It is premature. Oh, yes, you are hurt, but it is unmelodious! Also, you will want all your voice after I am gone." He chuckled, and removed M. de Biran, who began to turn purple, into what light there was. "Why," said Logan, "you are a damned chameleon. That colour"—M. de Biran vibrated gently—"that colour distresses my beautiful eyes. Please you, admire my beautiful eyes. Eh?" His grip relaxed an instant.

"Yes, oh, yes, m——" The grip tightened.

"Monsieur admires my beautiful eyes. Good. Now I was going to hurt you, but I behold an amateur of beauty! I will not hurt you." His left hand went to his dagger. M. de Biran was inspired by a vision of sudden death. He thrust his hand into his clothes and pulled out a purse and pushed it mutely against Logan's left hand. The purse chinked. "Eh?" said Logan. "Oh — monsieur advances a plea" — he dandled the purse in his hand — "and a very weighty plea!" The grip on monsieur's throat relaxed. "We, Robert Logan, by the grace of God, for cause duly shown, do allow and enjoin our trusty and well-beloved—little chameleon—

to go home to bed. Go!" Monsieur, though free, did not go. First, as was natural, he felt at his throat; second, as was also natural, he coughed; third, he took Logan by the coat.

"Monsieur," he said hoarsely, "there is more than that." Logan had him by the throat again in an instant. "No, monsieur, no, not with me," gasped M. de Biran. He was projected promptly against the wall. "But, monsieur, if you would let me stay——"

"Stay! *Ventre du Pape*, you——" thundered Logan. "Well, and if I let you stay?"

"Two hundred pounds," said M. de Biran, looking up at him cunningly. And Logan said:—

"Get 'em!"

"But, monsieur, I want to——" Logan's hand came over his mouth.

"The fact is, you are too obvious," Logan said benevolently. "I want two hundred pounds—you want—precisely! We will gratify ourselves, my dear. Run and gratify me."

"You swear——?" Logan swore—in several languages.

"——so curse your little legs! Run!" he concluded.

M. de Biran lodged in the Turl. Naturally, he was soon back. He bore a bag.

"I may stay, monsieur?" he cried, clinging to his bag.

"Till the last trump," said Logan, taking it.

"And, monsieur, monsieur, if, when he is coming

out, you would put a lamp in the window——" said Biran, clutching his sleeve.

"Amen, and so be it!" cried Logan, and he went back with shaking shoulders. Ogilvy received a gentleman who laughed till he choked and gurgled and swore—but laughed still. Ogilvy inquired the reason. Logan was half articulate and most obscure. "B—buy a field," he gurgled, "to b—b—burst in!" And he wept.

## CHAPTER XXVI.

### WHY LOGAN STOOD AT THE WINDOW.

IT remains to explain why Logan stood at the window and why he swore.

That afternoon the walls of Merton had beheld a gentleman with a bad conscience. Up and down the kidney stones of Merton Street Frank Somers paced, endeavouring to see things as they were. These thoughts were dominant: to a lady whose—whose happiness he desired—he had brought a bitter grief by trusting the word of one who was obviously false —M. de Biran, who called Elizabeth Jezebel; also, there was—M. de Biran had told him—a woman with whom Gray had a quarrel, and it might be that Gray, who had spared his life and his honour, had told the truth after all. Spared his life and his honour—to that his memory reverted with a touch of shame, and though Frank was in no case to judge justly, it was not much more than the truth. An active conscience told him with emphasis that he had not deserved this, that he had deserved no kindness at all at the hands of the Master of Gray. He tramped up and down ashamed. Nevertheless, there was a mystery: suppose M. de Biran false as the fiend, yet the Master had admitted Biran's charge. In any case, the Master was a knave; that appeared, and withal this knave

had surpassed him in chivalry, this knave was the bosom friend of Philip Sidney, "that true model of worth". The riddle was not easy to rede.

Conscience insisted irrationally that he must do something. Conscience failed to indicate what to do, and the stones of Merton Street suffered. The shadows grew longer and faded. The thrushes in the elms fell silent. Over the water meadows grey mist came creeping. His pride laughed at him for torturing himself on account of a rogue. But the riddle, he knew, must have its answer found, for his own honour's sake, for the sake of her whom he loved, who loved this rogue and hero. Frank went to see the Master of Gray.

It was the sound of his name that drove Logan to meditation and oaths. Logan also found the world incomprehensible. The Master of Gray had not only failed to kill his man, but had suffered a wound—a thing strange and unexampled. And, behold, the malefactor came incontinent to call on Patrick. The Laird of Restalrig was indignant; he strode angrily to the window and pondered on these miracles and swore, until the moment of his seeing M. de Biran.

The while Frank, since he was there to confess folly, strove to do it with a good grace.

"Sir," he said to the Master—who bowed and smiled and held out his left hand—"Sir, I am come to ask your pardon." The honest blue eyes looked into the Master's, who clung to Frank's hand.

"Faith, sir, there is no need at all," said he, "though you will believe I am glad of your knowing

I had not fallen to that." And Frank, gazing at the beautiful pale face, heard himself say with something like surprise:—

"I am glad too." Gray started, gripped his hand again hard and said:—

"I thank you."

"There is something else," said Frank in a low voice. "That poisoned ring—I charged it on you because of what a Frenchman Biran told me." Gray laughed. "I know now that he is a knave. Can you—will you—did he lie?" Gray looked at him a long time.

"He did not lie," he said at last. Frank stared and frowned. Gray laughed sadly. "You do not understand? No, nor I. It was necessary—it was done. For me, that is enough. I think we breathe a different air, you . . . your friends—and I." His eyes grew darker: he leant towards Frank and touched his arm. "Sir, it was true what I said—I did all this for her—and thereby I have brought her pain. Do you doubt I grieve?" Frank looked at the sad eyes and bowed. Closer on his arm pressed Gray's hand. "It is finished, sir. I have done the thing I loathed—brought her . . . brought her . . . grief. Forgive me."

"You ask me?" cried Frank, wondering.

"I ask you," said the Master of Gray, and looked in his eyes. He took Frank's hand. "Can you?"

"Ay," Frank muttered. At last he understood something. There was silence for a while.

"Teach her . . . teach her to forget," Gray

muttered, and Frank wrung his hand. The eyes of them both were misty.

"God bless you!" said Frank hoarsely.

Gray's lips quivered in a smile.

The chapel bells began ringing while they sat there hand in hand, strange friends, and the bells had fallen silent ere—

"Is it . . . too late?" said Frank, and Gray laughed.

"I am I. It is too late," said he.

With the last word said they rose together by a common impulse. Once more they looked at each other, and Frank turned away to the door.

Logan, feeble still from laughing, heard the latch.

"Patrick, do you go out?" he cried starting up.

"No—but to the door," said the Master of Gray.

Their steps rang in the passage.

"The fact is, it would be interesting!" said Logan with a chuckle.

He took up a candle and marched to the window.

## CHAPTER XXVII.

*IRE TAMEN RESTAT.*

SUDDEN a shout broke the evening quiet.

"Guard your back!"

And Frank turned to see Biran's yellow devilish face and feel the rending pain of his dagger. He made a grasp at Biran's arm, but the little man wriggled away. He had seen Frank's face.

"*Notre Dame de Fayette!*" he muttered trembling, and Frank, stumbling forward to clutch him, fell on his face. M. de Biran fled: for a man was running towards him crying—

"Murder! Stop! Stop!" It was the Master of Gray. Left-handed he plucked the dagger from his belt and sent it whistling after monsieur. Monsieur clapped his hand to his side but ran on. "Logan, God curse you, Logan!" cried the Master wildly. A roar and a thud answered him as Logan broke the casement and jumped down to the street. He went lumbering after monsieur, through the gloom.

The Master of Gray bent over Frank and lifted him very gently. Frank made no sound, but the Master caught his breath and groaned. Fairly between the shoulders the long Italian dagger was driven. Monsieur had struck well. Frank looked up at him.

"The Frenchman," he said, and, sighing, "I am sped." The Master of Gray knew it for truth; he could do no more than press the limp fingers. Townsfolk ran up chattering and crying loud. Frank looked painfully round the throng and then back to the Master. "Let us go," he whispered, and he smiled. His fingers felt for Gray's. "'Tis now for you," he said, and he pressed the hand on his waist that bore him up. The Master groaned. His Scottish servant Hugh Brown stood unconcerned by him.

"A shutter," the Master said sharply, and Hugh, thrusting through the crowd, tore one from the wall. Hugh and another put the dying man upon it, Ogilvy supported him from behind, and the Master led on through the gloom. He cursed the fate that had made his right arm useless: had his right arm launched that dagger, monsieur at the least had paid.

On they went through the dark narrow streets and the ordered footfall echoed.

"Faster, faster!" the dying man muttered.

"It will cause greater pain," said Ogilvy sagely, and Frank looked up at him and laughed.

"Faster!" said the Master of Gray.

Very soon they came down the little lane by the side of Oriel and turned in through the wicket gate, slowly and carefully. Slowly and carefully their burden was borne up the narrow stair, while the Master of Gray knocked at the door above.

"You!" A wild cry of amazement as she started up with flashing eyes.

"Lady, would to God I came with better cause," he said. The heavy shuffling on the stair came nearer. "Mr. Somers is sorely wounded."

"Frank? Ah, and you——"

"He was stabbed by my inn."

"You—you!" she cried, white with horror. "'Twas you!" And the Master of Gray groaned and made no answer. Frank was borne in and set down on the couch. She ran to him and caught his hands. "Frank, is it sore?" Frank tried to smile, and the white lips trembled. His eyes were dull and set.

"Go!" said the Master fiercely to the gaping bearers, and they went stumbling out.

She put her arm round Frank, and then she felt the dagger. Into the white face she looked. "Frank . . . ?" Feebly he stroked her hand. "Is it——?" she murmured, looking up at Gray.

"Lady, it is!" said the Master of Gray, and hung his head.

She stared at him a moment: then—

"Ay, you should know," she cried fiercely. "Out—out——" Frank's fingers pressed on hers. He gasped and tried to speak.

"No . . . the Master . . . the Master . . . he . . ." The feeble voice died hoarsely away. The lips trembled, but no sound came.

"Frank!" she cried, pressing his hand, drawing him closer. Hand and body lay limp in her clasp. "Frank!" she whispered, her lips close to his ear. At last her voice found him deaf.

It was a moment ere, clinging to him, she knew it,

and then a loud sob broke from her, and she hid her face and cried. The dead man fell back helpless, and Gray came quickly to lay the body down. He drew out the dagger, and put his kerchief to take the blood from the wound.

She heard his movement and sprang to her feet, her hair all disarrayed, the tears wet on her cheeks.

"You dare touch him?" she cried, thrusting him fiercely aside. "You! And he knew."

"Lady, he knew!" said the Master of Gray, and dared meet her eyes.

"Ah, why does God let you?" she cried wildly. "Go, go, for pity."

He bowed and went out.

Logan he discovered drinking.

"Well?" Logan drank.

"The fact is, Patrick, he had a horse." Gray shrugged his shoulders and turned away. "And you are cursed ungrateful——" he looked at the Master, "for your luck," said he.

"Luck!" said Gray, and laughed.

Logan thought it unnecessary to explain.

## CHAPTER XXVIII.

### *NE ULTRA CREPIDAM.*

CHRISTOPHER BUNCE, drysalter, of the Cornmarket, Simon Alder, mercer, of St. Aldate's, had seen a man with muffled face lurking at the corner of Ship Street, by the church porch. Peter Slater, scrivener, of the Long Wall, had seen him "accosted violently" by another, a man of great stature, and beheld him run away thereafter. Thomas Tallboys, cordwainer, of Boar Lane, had seen a little man with muffled face strike the dead; had also seen the Master of Gray run out from the inn crying "murder".

Robert Logan, a Scotsman, of Restalrig and Fastcastle, testified that he was the man of great stature, that the little man was one Philippe de Biran, that, liking not the way Biran lurked by the church, he had driven the creature away with blows. Called by the Master of Gray—his dear friend and cousin—he had pursued Biran into Turl Street, where, finding a groom and two horses, the Frenchman had mounted, and he and the groom galloped over Magdalen Bridge. Questioned, he replied that he had known Biran in Paris, where that "child of grief" had essayed to murder the Master of Gray.

Patrick, Master of Gray, a Scotsman, had seen the blow struck by Biran from behind. That was M. de

Biran's manner, who had attempted his life more than once. On the morning of the murder, he had, indeed, fought with Mr. Somers; Mr. Somers had indeed been visiting him before the murder; but that visit was made in order to compose the morning quarrel, and was successful. Mr. Somers was his honoured friend.

Sir Francis Walsingham had seen a fierce affray between Mr. Somers and M. de Biran a few hours before the murder. Biran had spoken despitefully of the Queen, and Mr. Frank Somers had called him liar and knave. Sir Francis arriving, M. de Biran had fled.

Here was proof more than enough for a jury of plain Englishmen. M. de Biran was found guilty of that deed which he had never sought to do. But monsieur was safe on shipboard in the Channel.

It was proof too little for a woman, who read in the whole strange story a dark intrigue, who asked why Gray's friend who had driven Biran away had not seen him come back, why he had suffered Biran to escape, why Gray himself had let Frank fall before his eyes, and found the answer to all this riddle, the cause of her friend's death, in the black traitorous heart of the man she had loved. Had loved—for love was dead: that she told herself a hundred times a day. And still, to her bitter shame, the memory of him came back invincible. She saw him calm and pale facing Frank's wrath and his ready sword: scarce was that vision driven forth when another came—with flashing eyes, with quick nervous blow, he sprang

to save her from Biran's lust: chiding herself, she tried to think of Frank, Frank who had worshipped her since they were boy and girl, Frank whom she could not love, poor, honest Frank—and sudden she felt an arm clasp her fiercely, dark glowing eyes hung over her, a low voice whispered, a kiss was hot on her lips, her lips gave back a kiss. All alone she flushed at the shame of it. What bitterer shame than this in the world—to have loved the Master of Gray, to love him in spite of all? Vainly she strove against her heart and tortured it. Her only respite from pain she found in pain, in honest tears for Frank.

One thing at least her maiden pride stricken deep could yet make sure. He, the cause of her shame should not know it: he should think that she scorned him as she ought.

"SIR,

"I have read your posy and need it no longer.

"M. COBHAM."

That she sent him with his ring, and the Master of Gray read it and smiled. He took up the ring and looked at it.

Gif trew report
To yow resort
Of my gud port
So tak me!

And memory filled out the verse too quickly—

Gif I exort
In evil sort,
Without confort
Forsaik me!

And he sent for answer only this, which he knew was no answer at all :—

"LADY,

"For the posy's sake, I pray your leave to keep a better gift.

"PATRICK GRAY."

But no other letter came to him from her.

In the street, at court when she met him, she would draw aside, gathering her skirts away from his touch. She bore her head high and proudly, and her eyes looked by him, unseeing.

The Master of Gray found need for philosophy and a friend. The Laird of Restalrig was the one and jovially offered the other in bulk. From both the Master fled, and found refuge with Philip Sidney. More than once he struggled to tell his story; more than once his heart failed him. And then one night as they came in together to Sidney's lodging at Corpus—

"Patrick, I wrote me a song this morning," Sidney said, and smiled. "Sit and hear." The Master sat and rested his head, as his way was then, on his hand.

"Would you did it more often," he answered, and Sidney laughed, and sang to his lute :—

"Ring out your bells! Let mourning shows be spread,
For Love is dead!
All love is dead, infected
With the plague of deep disdain;
Worth as nought worth rejected;
And faith fair scorn doth gain.

Ah, Patrick, is it true then?" he whispered quickly, then struck a louder note :—

> "From so ungrateful fancy,
> From such a female frenzy,
> From them that use men thus,
> Good Lord, deliver us!"

He paused.

"Ay, it becomes me well," said Gray, and he laughed. He leant over the table and caught the hand that struck the notes. "No, Philip, no. 'Tis my blame, all mine!" he cried. Sidney let the lute go and took his hand: then the Master looked away.

"I meant not to trouble you," said Sidney—"God knows, not to force your secrets."

"Best hear it from me and have done!" Gray muttered, and now with burning cheeks he turned again to his friend. "Philip, you know I was Mary's man—worked for her, plotted for her. In Paris I learnt 'twas a lost cause, and I turned to the victors. In Paris, too, I met a lady. For her sake, for your cause, I betrayed whom once I served. And I thought, like what I am, that she would honour me for it since your Queen had much profit thereby. I—I—she loved me. . . . She came to hear of my treachery and spurned me." Sidney's eyes were calm and steady upon him. Gray rose, and he laughed. "That is the story of your noble friend, Patrick Gray." He took up his hat. "God keep you, Philip. Forgive me!" he muttered, and turned away.

"Patrick!" Sidney's hand caught his and held him back. There was no touch of the awaited scorn in Sidney's eyes or his low voice. "Am I a friend for summer weather?"

"You understood?" Gray muttered, wondering.

"I understand," said Sidney, and he smiled. "And I will tell you more. Another lover the lady had, and he must needs quarrel with this base friend of mine." His hand pressed closer and his voice fell low. "And my friend spared that other even at cost of his own blood; my friend, for her sake, would help another to his love, so base he was. For his love he gave up honour, then for his love's sake love, so base he was, Patrick, this—my friend." Gray wrung his hand.

"Would to God I could get again bygones!" he cried.

"Bygones!" cried Sidney. "Let the dead take care for the dead!" He broke again into the song:—

"Alas, I lied! Rage hath this error bred:
Love is not dead!
Love is not dead, but sleepeth
In her unmatchèd mind,
Where she his counsel keepeth
Till due deserts she find.

Ah, Patrick, 'tis a poor fool's verse, and your fool cries 'Go, hang!' to death. Dies nought but what deserves it. Base have you been? So then have I, and the angels may cast the account. 'Tis not for man to sit and weep o'er dead lies. Dead are they, let the worms make merry. Love is quick, and faith, and hope, and honour is set for man to win, prize of the world's rough tourney. Endued in the white armour of God let us run the course and fight the good fight with His foes; then shall the stern maid Justice blot her damning scroll, and fair Honour smile and deck the

flickering lance-point with her laureate crown. Come you back to your lady where she sits aloof in maiden pride, there at her feet to lay in all humility the guerdon hard won in high emprise. Nay, is life lived already? Is honour for ever lost? Let us to the fight again. The things in my life have been vain, vain. I have walked in a vague course. You and I, Patrick, friends and brothers, go we straight to the broad field of war and make our renown together!" Gray laughed sadly.

"Ah, Philip, you put us together; sadly unlike, God knows. For you, there is honour and trust; for me, none from any man—'my due deserts I find'."

"Honour and trust from me now and always. From another, Patrick, from another ere many months are gone. Come with me to Holland and aid me, and we will snatch our laurels from the Spaniard and prove ourselves to all the world. We will tear the tortured land from Parma's grip and break his motley strength! Holland shall break out in psalms to God, and Spain shall bow her haughty head and Philip tremble in his narrow room at the Escurial! All Christendom shall ring with our names, and together they shall go down in story, Patrick, together, yours and mine! Come, then!" He held out his hand and Gray caught it.

"*Mordieu!* I will come," he cried smiling, "and do a man's work, Philip, but, alack! no more."

They fell to talk of the war in Holland and Parma's strength and weakness, and sat till the night was old, and were happy.

Now on a day soon after to my Lord Burghley and Sir Francis Walsingham sitting together in conference an usher announced the Master of Gray. My lord looked at Sir Francis and made a sign to the usher: entered the Master of Gray, and my lord lay back in his chair watching him from under heavy white brows, then rose slowly to bow. A chair was set for the Master in the cross fire of the old men's eyes.

Walsingham shuffled his papers.

"Concerning an offer of service to her Majesty—an answer written in her own hand: 'For the Master's gallant offer we thank him heartily, yet willing not that he should venture life and estate on a dubious cast, holding in memory good service rendered to us in Scotland, and since there is still *maximum discrimen* we would have him in the service wherein he has worthily achieved so continue.'" A smile hung on the thin lips as he looked up at Gray. Gray flushed.

"In fine, sir, I may not go?" he cried.

"Nay, who can constrain you?" said Walsingham quietly. "Only—if you go, 'tis at your own peril, and of your will and motion, sir."

"Why, then?" cried Gray fiercely. "Sidney may go——"

A harsh laugh from Walsingham checked him.

"Philip? Ah, is it the same?" My lord Burghley leant forward. "Surely, sir, the proverb is forgot—*ne sutor ultra crepidam.* Sir Philip Sidney, a gentleman in all things worthy, hath never aspired to the tasks that are your delight. Why then do you seek his?"

"In Scotland is sore need of a person discreet and solely devoted to—her Majesty's service," said Walsingham. "To meet that need, sir, is none so apt as you. I make you," he bowed, "my compliments."

"Speak out, *mordieu*," cried Gray. "You must have me for your spy?"

"The name is perhaps harsh," Walsingham murmured, smiling.

"The part, sir, was of your choosing," said Burghley.

Gray broke out of the room with an oath.

The two old men looked at each other.

"It will mean nought, my lord," said Walsingham smiling. My lord said nothing.

*Facilis descensus Averno*—the stale verse would not be denied. It rang, a cuckoo-cry, in the weary ears of the Master of Gray, struggling in the grasp of subterranean statesmen. Avernus was tenacious. Indeed, there was no help. In the service of Elizabeth he was constrained to stay, for none other would receive him now. The bridges were broken, the boats were burnt; of metaphors, failing resource, his mind was fruitful. To Gloriana he had given himself body and soul. Gloriana never refused a gift.

In vain Sidney begged Walsingham to ensure him the aid of the Master of Gray. Walsingham pleaded her inflexible majesty. In vain Gray spoke softly with Gloriana. Without him, said Gloriana, her poor Walsingham would not answer for Scotland. Gloriana played with his fingers and discoursed of jewels.

So when Sir Philip Sidney took ship for Flushing

the Master stood beside him only to bid farewell. Away over the dark water the sun fell red as blood: the tide was at the full, and the little barque lay almost still. Amid the din of the creaking capstan and the sailors' oaths Sidney and Gray walked the deck.

"St. George goes to quell the dragon, Perseus will save Andromeda! Ah, Philip, fair tasks for fair desert!" said the Master. "Do not forget your friends less happy."

"Forget?" said Sidney, and smiled and looked into his eyes. "Shall I, Patrick? Nay, will you grudge me the easier fight? 'Tis not in Holland alone are dragons to kill, laurels to win. For you the harder battle, and for you the strength to win it. Ay, Patrick, there is work enough at home in your land and mine. We will have our fame yet, each his own. Mine is but the lighter won. God keep you!"

"God keep you, Philip," said Gray, smiling sadly.

With that they parted, and Sidney sailed away to the wars, there to win renown great as even his heart could desire; and the Master of Gray went back to his own honourable country and his gentle King. He too was to win for himself renown. Dearer friends than brother to brother, each has his own fame yet—Philip Sidney and Patrick Gray.

## CHAPTER XXIX.

*CALYPSO NE POUVAIT SE CONSOLER.*

ALL the world was happy. Mocked, deluded, betrayed by her dear cousin Elizabeth, still in her prison Mary's heart rose indomitable. Victim of numberless treasons, of foes who thought little of mercy as of honour, she fought on dauntless. Good cause she had for hope through that pleasant summer. She was taken to Chartley Manor, a home of comfort after the grim pestilent castle at Tutbury, and little by little her gaoler's vigilance grew weaker. To ride abroad, gallop with hound and crossbow after the deer —Paulet gave a sour assent to these her pleasures. Happiest of all was the day when her secretary broke into her room, his eyes swollen with a secret. Wondrous gift of heaven, there was a water-tight box in the beer barrel, and therein were letters from Gilbert Gifford, from her tried friend the Archbishop of Glasgow. All the summer through the beer barrel was postman. Letters came and went and a great scheme grew. Freedom came nearer, and Mary was young again with happiness.

Happy also was Sir Francis Walsingham. Gilbert Gifford, a faithful soul, saw to it that never a letter failed to come under Walsingham's eye. So the great scheme grew.

Happy, above most, it made the good brewer of Burton who filled the casks. Lavishly Mary paid his service as postman. Lavishly Walsingham. And the brewer—kin doubtless of the Laird of Restalrig—charged Walsingham double price for his beer.

Happy were many heroes, unhonoured now and unsung. French, Italian, Walloon—gentlemen of fortune and the Catholic faith foregathered in England betimes, like vultures over the dying. Back to England came Father Hay and Father Holt, chattering and busy. Back stole M. de Biran to be welcomed heartily, but in private, by M. de Châteauneuf, ambassador of the most Christian king. And Sir Francis Walsingham was deaf and blind and still as the dead.

So bounteous happiness the great scheme brought. The Guises and Philip of Spain saw their tardy triumph near at last. Triumph coming Elizabeth saw. *Mortui non mordent*, the dead bite not, said Gloriana thoughtfully. The same ingenious reflection gladdened Philip. Catholic and Protestant lifted up their hearts in pious thanksgiving for the coming cataclysm.

Fount of all this joy, the Master of Gray had scant share in it. All his mind was set on aiding Philip Sidney, and he beat Scotland for recruits. Four thousand men he sent to fight under Sidney's banner, and was yet little content. The dull daily round of labour was scanty for his eager wit, and nothing more than that there was for him to do. So he chafed in Avernus, thinking often with a bitter laugh of the

laurels that Sidney had foretold; thinking with a sigh of the proud hopes that were dead and the love that could not die. Sometimes memory brought before him those remarkable deeds whereby he had won Gloriana's heart, and lost his love's. Most often the clever brain turned not to the treachery which May knew and loathed, but that darker treason none had heard save Walsingham and Gloriana, the great scheme, cause of so much joy. Now, and to himself he could not tell why, he struggled to forget it. Still his mind would cry the plan was afoot, the ambush was laid, the axe was in the air and would not fail. For answer he could but tell himself that for good or evil the deed was done, and strive in vain to forget. His thoughts progressed in a circle.

"Would to God I could get again bygones!" His cry to Sidney came from his heart. Nor Sidney nor any man could answer it. God, it appeared, would not.

Walsingham wrote to him often, asking cunning questions about the King and his council. Sir Francis had found a useful tool, and was not minded to let it lie idle. The tool did not esteem the honour. What answers Walsingham had were curt and valueless, and Sir Francis began to debate whether the Master of Gray meditated another treason, and found comfort in the thought that soon it would be little matter.

So the Master beheld without delight his many inventions. His face grew haggard, the beautiful dark eyes dull and sunken. He became interesting.

Two women were interested, for both loved him—

the one though she knew him. Effie, his sister, and Lady Kinaldie saw his languor and weariness. Lady Kinaldie, by way of distraction, put herself in his way. The Master did not appear to see her. Effie's bright eyes persuaded a jovial old friend, Sir William St. Clair of Rosslyn, to take the distressed Master by kindly insistence away from King Jamie's harassing hunts and more harassing learning to Rosslyn Castle. Thither came Effie and her father and the Master with Ogilvy in his train. The Laird of Restalrig was beating Berwickshire anew for recruits.

It was a morning in early autumn. Together the Master and Effie walked down the glen. All around them and high above rose the trees in serried array, flashing golden in the sunlight. A sheer hundred feet below, at the foot of the red rock cliff, the Esk flowed brown and noisy. Over against them the cliff glowed dark under a coverlet of fern, or broke away in deep rough chasms.

Effie and her brother went hand in hand down the steep path. Skirt drawn tight in one brown hand she would drag him headlong down a break-neck slope, while her slim red ankles flashed fast and sure, then let him take her weight up the hill as she hung panting and flushed on his arm. The Master of Gray earned his bread by the sweat of his brow.

"Oh, Patrick, dear, you are desperate stern," Effie panted, straining forward while the Master tried to go delicately.

"Stern? 'Faith, I melt," the Master protested. "Effie, I—" she dragged him into a run—"I am the

Gadarene swine, I think—and you are the devils. Many devils, Effie!" He swung his diabolical sister round a sharp turn, and they checked with long thudding steps on a stretch of level ground. Effie danced in front of him.

"You are old, Patrick, you are old!" she cried. It was her deadliest insult. Patrick mopped his face.

"Not a whit: 'tis you are fat, Effie, heavy and fat!"

"Oh . . . Patrick!" cried poor Effie. She came closer and looked up beseeching. "I am not truly, am I?" He pinched her round chin, and shook his head solemnly.

"Like a guinea-pig," said he; and then as her lips began to droop, and her eyes were very serious, he was constrained to laugh.

"I am not!" cried Effie indignantly. "They—they have no tails!" The propriety of that answer set the Master of Gray holding his sides.

"Oh, Effie!" he sobbed, "'tis sadly true. They—they have no tails. Let us weep!" He wept.

"You are stupid," said Effie. Her brother choked. "And you are old, Patrick. Yes, you are old—dreadfully old!" Patrick reached out to avenge himself, but she turned and ran, slim red legs springing from rock to rock. More heavily came the pursuer. The race was to the longer legs, and soon Effie felt the old familiar grip of an arm round her waist. A voice in her ear said:—

"Rogue!" She was swept off her feet, one strong arm was round, the other beneath her, her cheek was touching her brother's. She struggled. "We'll go

to heaven together if you do!" he cried, for on that steep path he could not stop. On they went thudding down, Effie laughing with delight, till at last at the foot by the river side the Master fell into a walk and stopped. "Well, you rogue? Am I old?"

"Let me down," said Effie. He tried to kiss her, and she covered her face with her hands.

"*À la bonne heure*," he said, and leant against the cliff pressing her close. Black laughing eyes looked through her fingers.

"Please!"

"I hope you are comfortable," said he.

She put her arms round his neck and kissed him. He let her down, and considered her in a judicial manner.

"To tell truth, you are not fat," said he.

But Effie was looking up at the other bank. High above them in the grounds of Hawthornden were a man and a woman. Faintly they heard voices.

"Who is it?" said Effie under her breath. The Master fanned himself with his hat.

"Lady Kinaldie—always Lady Kinaldie, she is like the poor. Also it appears to be our dear Robin. Well, *madame se console*." He laughed: little it mattered what Robin might tell now, for the hour was over late. "Eh—*mordieu*—" the comedy on the other bank became romantic—"Effie, we intrude upon her grief—come!" He laughed and took his sister's hand. But she had no answering smile: her cheeks were white, her lips set close, and she stared wide-eyed, unseeing.

As they toiled slowly back he watched her, wondering at first, and then with understanding. He saw tears gather and lie trembling in her dark eyes, well over and glisten on her cheek. Then he slipped his arm round her.

"Dear—'tis only a game to Robin, and faith, scarce that to her—only a game."

"A game!" said Effie with a sob.

His hand went up to his moustache, and while he pressed her closer, as she tried vainly to stifle another sob, he looked up at the sky, thinking.

"Yes, *mordieu*, a game; and a game, Master Robin, to play *à trois*. The fact is, Effie," he imitated the dogmatic roar of his cousin Logan, "the fact is, he is impertinent. Master Robin poacheth!" He curled his moustache. "Infamous and perjured Robin!" he said and laughed. "Oh, Effie, Effie, pray for eyes to see the ridiculous. You are cruel: Robin avenges himself. I am cold: madame consoles herself. Be not cruel—Robin will not need vengeance—'the fire began to burn the stick, the stick began to beat the dog'—I will not be cold, madame will not need consolation. The while perceive that we are all ridiculous. You, who like Robin, have no fair word for him. My lady, to whom the unique Robin is as the beasts that perish, hangs on his beautiful eyes. And you and I see those whose hearts are set on us trying to play at love together." He laughed. Effie looked up at him pitifully. "Blessed are the merciful—how I have forgot—but let us be merciful, Effie."

"Patrick, she—she——?" Effie whispered anxiously.

"She has that distinguished honour," said the Master of Gray. Effie's eyes grew tender.

"Patrick——?" He smiled. "Oh, be kind!" she cried.

"For reasons," said the Master of Gray, who had no pity to squander on Lady Kinaldie.

"And Robin then——?"

"Robin passes the time."

Effie pressed his hand, and they went back through the glen without more tears.

Now in the orchard Sir William St. Clair came waddling and puffing towards them. A fat loon from Dalkeith, he remarked, had brought a fat letter. The which he gave to the Master.

The Master tore it open. It came from Maitland, and begged him come to court speedily, for great events were pending—the which Sir John, a cautious man, would not commit to hand of writ.

"It appears, Effie, I must go to Dalkeith." Effie turned pale.

"Oh—Patrick—then——"

"All will be well," said he smiling.

In the old happy way he congratulated fate on its devices.

## CHAPTER XXX.

### ONLY A GAME.

"I—I WAS going riding," stammered Ogilvy, and blushed. The Master smiled benignly.

"It happens *à merveille*, Robin," said he. "I also go riding; even Effie goes riding, I think?"

"But we need not trouble Mr. Ogilvy," said Effie, tossing her head.

"Trouble!—why, no. The prospect delights him. Behold——" He indicated Robin's red face. "So much that courtesy is forgot."

Riding they went all three, and the Master perversely led them down the valley and through the river, and up the steep hillside towards Hawthornden, the while he talked for three. Robin began to edge away to the right; the Master, unweary of well-doing, bore a little to the left. Then at last he drove in his spurs with a cry—

"'Tis Lady Kinaldie, *mordieu!*" and left them. Robin blushed, and would not look at Effie. Effie, not looking at Robin, blushed.

Graceful and romantic of air, the Master flung his horse on its haunches and bowed low:—

"Fair, fair and twice so fair!
As fair as any may be——"

he quoted, looking up at her with adoration in his eyes. Adoration she deserved. The perfect form was outlined by her habit, her black hair was bound low and made the white cheek whiter, save where a bright red stained it.

"You are too kind," she said coldly; but her eyes dwelt on him and were hungry.

"Nay, lady. Only I am not blind. You bide with Hawthornden? Faith, but heaven is kind!"

"You need me, then?" He looked at her, and her eyes fell before his.

"It is deserved, lady," he said in a low voice. "Can you not forgive?"

"Is—is naught to forgive," she stammered, and blushed. She recalled a conversation with M. de Biran.

"Alack, too much!" said the Master of Gray. "*Dame*, who can get bygones again? Let us pluck to-day's flower." He took her gauntleted hand. "Am I forgiven?" he asked tenderly, hoping the while that Effie and Robin were not making his labour in vain.

"For what—a rude word?" she said, and she laughed uneasily.

"A blasphemy." Her fingers pressed his, and he kissed her glove. Then he laughed.

"To the past, the past! Let us have our day—ah, too short, lady! Why have I not seen you the sooner? For I must to Dalkeith to-morrow."

"Dalkeith?" cried the lady.

"Alack! . . . But to us the hour!" He laughed

and laid his hand on hers. "Come!" They swept away through the wood.

When Lady Kinaldie came to Hawthornden gate that night there was a spray of honeysuckle in her breast, and she let her hand cling to Gray's as he kissed it.

"Over soon!" he murmured sighing. She blushed, and pressed his hand.

"I need an escort, sir," she said softly, and smiled.

He sat erect.

"To the end of the world!"

"Nay, to Dalkeith," she whispered; and dropped the rein on her horse's neck and was gone in the twilight. The Master of Gray looked after her smiling.

At supper Effie was silent. After supper Effie was to seek and Robin. Effie kissed the Master twice good-night and ran back to kiss him again.

So it happened that close on the sunset hour of a short autumn day Lady Kinaldie and the Master rode into Dalkeith side by side. The wide street was thronged and loud with talk, and they passed slowly by many curious eyes. Come to her door, the Master sprang down and lifted her from the saddle. And he smiled as he bowed, for he thought that the game was played.

"Will you not . . .?" she whispered, holding his hand. Of sheer kindness of heart the Master followed her up the stair and in.

The supper room was ablaze with light, and warm and scented from the cedar wood crackling on the hearth. By the fire sat Lady Kinaldie, her chin on

her hand, and the ruddy glow fell on one cheek and breast. She sprang up all white and beautiful.

"So please, my lord," she cried, and, smiling, fell before him in a curtsy. He bowed, and led her to her place at the table. Silver and glass sparkled, and Burgundy glowed dark in quaint Venetian vessels. Silently the steward entered, and silent and deft he served them. No word was spoken, but the Master lifted his full glass and bowed to her and set it down empty. He ate and drank and talked lightly of things indifferent, while she answered eagerly, and smiled and watched him with happy eyes.

At last he lay back in his chair, his hand still on the wine glass, and then :—

"*Mordieu!*" he muttered suddenly, and he flushed. "That—that is the Queen?" Such another picture as his own looked down at him—a girl's pale gentle face, a crown of russet hair.

"Yes, Queen Mary," said Lady Kinaldie, glancing over her shoulder. Then turning she saw his eyes steady upon it and grew pale. "Who else ,who else?" she cried fiercely.

"No one," said the Master, and drained his glass.

She sounded a silver bell by her side, and the steward entered and bore away the plates and food. On the black oak table the wine and wine-cups were left. Fresh wood the steward put on the fire, and the fragrance grew suddenly pungent. Two great chairs he rolled to either side the hearth, and bowed to the ground and went out.

Lady Kinaldie, rising slowly, smiled and pointed

Gray to the larger chair. The Master stood up and laughed :—

"Lady, lady, lead me not into temptation. Consider poor Maitland, who needs me sore."

"Shall he have more honour than I?" she cried. "Nay, stay for courtesy." And the Master sat down. She turned—and her white robe was red in the firelight—to fill a cup of wine. She bore it to him, and falling on one knee beside his chair she lifted the cup to his lips, her round arms white against his velvet coat, her bosom swaying lightly. He caught the perfume of her hair.

"So please, my lord," she said softly, and she smiled. He put his hand on hers and drained the wine; holding by his shoulder she turned and put down the cup, then clasped her hands around his arm, and looked up at him, trembling a little. "So please you?" she whispered, and her eyes were hungry. At that he bent and gathered her in his arms, and kissed her, and she clasped him fiercely to her heart.

"Poor Marie! Poor Marie!" he said, and he stroked her hair.

"Poor?" she cried happily, and looked up into his face. She saw a calm, compassionate smile.

She tore herself from his arms wildly.

"Ah, 'tis a cheat, 'tis all a cheat—you have no love—no love!" she cried. "No, do not touch me—you do not care—ah, Mary, mother!" She fell on her knees by the table and hid her face.

"God forgive me!" the Master muttered. "Marie, Marie, have I wronged you far? God knows, I have

not sought it! At Rosslyn, Effie's heart was breaking for you and Robin—and truth it is, I care for you—but not so . . ." He touched her bare shoulder tenderly, and under his hand she shuddered. "Ah, Marie, who can help us?" At that she looked up pale and wild.

"It was a cheat then?" she cried, and her white breast surged and fell. The Master bent his head. "'Twas not for me at all? . . . Ah, I think there is no kindness in you, and I—mother of God!—I saved you, I lied for you——"

"You, Marie?" She sprang up, proud and beautiful.

"Yes, I—I! Oh, you doubt, yes, you will not understand. You—you never would." She choked a sob. "'Twas when we came to Leith—and they asked me if you were true, if they should kill you. And you—you that cheat me and shame me—I said, I knew you for true. Yes, I saved you, you, you, despite of all!" Her voice broke and she sobbed.

The Master stood amazed as one who sees a vision.

"God!" he muttered; and then he took her hand. "Marie! I never knew; how could I guess?" he cried, and she laughed shrill. "Now I am your debtor always, and I—what thanks can a man give for life?" He laughed. "Ay, well, *mordieu*, well have I thanked you. Oh, Marie, Marie, art nobler than I—try to forgive!" She stared at him with tears glistening on her cheeks and in her eyes. She said nothing, while he knelt and kissed her hand. He turned, and was going out. Then—

"Patrick, Patrick!" she cried, running to him.

"Ah, Patrick, I—I lied!" She was torn with sobs, and he took her in his arms and tried to quiet her. "Nay, dear," she gasped, "strike me, kill me! 'Twere right! I—I—'twas I that turned your love's heart. I told Biran—he told of the ring! Oh, my dear, forgive me, forgive!"

Mechanically his hand moved to and fro on her bare shoulder. Still his arm held her up firmly. His face was white and quivering and he bit at his under lip. He saw, looking straight down upon him, Mary's face, the girl's face so strangely like his lost love.

"Marie, Marie!" he muttered at last. "My dear, I think love hates us, you and me," and he laughed sadly.

"Patrick?" she cried, wondering, lifting tear-laden eyes and trembling lips. "And do you not hate me?" He shook his head, and smiled and caressed her.

"Nay, Marie. Soon or late it would have come. What does it matter how or when? Faith, I think we know each other over well for hate. Let us be friends and forgive"—he bent and kissed her—"my dear, God help you, God keep you!"

He bore her to her chair, and set her in it, and stooped once more to kiss her forehead ere he went out into the night.

So that game was played.

Before the moon was up Sir John Maitland bade farewell at Dalkeith Palace to the Envoy Extraordinary of England, Sir Henry Cobham.

"I have good hopes to compass it," said Sir John, smiling benignly. "And in truth, sir, I am ever the true friend of your mistress." He pressed Sir Henry's hand tenderly. And Sir Henry eyed him with some scorn.

"Like the Master of Gray?" he said quietly. Sir John Maitland pressed his hand once again.

"Let us hope he is faithful!" he murmured piously.

"And is he not?" cried Sir Henry.

"God forbid! He is a brand plucked from the burning, we pray. And yet," his eyes grew narrow, "it is strange that he has not come to me, and tarries with a Moabite woman, Lady Kinaldie." Sir Henry laughed shortly.

"It appears he is in love."

"The desire," said Sir John sorrowfully, "of the flesh."

## CHAPTER XXXI.

### ASTROPHEL.

THERE was a man awaiting the Master of Gray at his inn—a man all plastered with mud, asleep and snoring in a chair. On his left arm a band of black was roughly tied; on his sword-hilt was a bow of crape.

"An Englishman with a letter, sir—sought ye at Rosslyn the morn," said the landlord, and shook the sleeper. "Now, my man, now—here is the Master."

The sleeper rose, stretching himself, and rubbed his eyes.

"Master of Gray, sir? Here is for you"—bowing awkwardly he gave the letter.

Gray broke it open and started as he saw the hand.

"You come from Sir Philip?" he cried smiling. The man bowed.

"From Arnhem this 16th of October, 1586.

"My most honoured the Master of Gray,

"My most honoured brother,

"If these few words express unto you the assuredness of my constant affection, they shall have performed the cause of my present sending unto you. And therein I pray you believe me, for I am very near to death. I think of you and long for you, dead or quick, till we meet again. And now

for weakness I take my leave, and leave you to the blessed protection of God.

"Your faithful brother,

"P. SIDNEY."

The paper trembled in Gray's hands, and he stared at the Englishman and tried to speak.

"Sir, he is dead," the man said in a low voice, and bowed his head.

"Philip, Philip!" Gray muttered, and then: "How was it, sir?" he asked quietly, while his throat shook.

"Sir, it was on the 22nd of September that we lay before Zutphen town. In the morning in the mist Sir Philip led two hundred of us to discover the Spaniards. On a sudden, under the fort guns, we came upon a thousand horse, and they charged us, and Sir Philip's horse was killed beneath him. Mine he took and charged again; thereafter we were strengthened and charged again, and a bullet from the walls broke his thigh and lodged there in it. God's death, sir," the man cried passionately, "but for chivalry he had not died. Before the battle he saw Sir William in light armour, and thereat he threw off his cuisses that he might not be safer." Gray smiled sadly.

"'Twas like him," he said.

"Yes, sir, God knows! . . . His horse was affrighted and galloped out of the fight. But he kept his seat and I caught the bridle, and we lifted him down and were bearing him to my Lord of Leicester. We could not staunch the blood, and he said the excess of

bleeding had made him thirst and called for drink. Presently Simon Denny brought it running, and then, sir, as he put the bottle to his mouth a common man was borne by, and he looked up ghastly, and Sir Philip perceiving, delivered it to him, and he said, 'Thy necessity is greater, friend'."

Gray was smiling still, and tears stood wet on his cheeks; he waited silently till the man could go on.

"Then he pledged the man, sir, and we bore him to Arnhem. The good vrow Gruittheuisens opened her house to him, and he lay there near a month, and the pain stang him very sore, sir. That letter he wrote to you, sir—it was the longest of all—and he wrote it the night before he died and bade me take it quick. But he died in the morning. He died very quietly."

The rough red face was working pitifully.

"So he is dead, sir, he is dead," the man muttered hoarsely.

"God keep him . . . God help us!" the Master groaned, and took the muddy hand and wrung it. "Sir, we loved him," he said.

"Ay, by God!"

"Philip, Philip!" the Master groaned.

And all that night while Sidney's envoy slept for very weariness, the Master sat by the window looking out to the black night, where the autumn wind was roaring through the trees and the rain beat upon the stones like hail.

## CHAPTER XXXII.

### THE HARVEST.

"'Tis pity you had no leisure to come sooner." The Secretary sighed, and looked from under his eyelashes.

"I am come now," said the Master shortly. His face was haggard from weariness and grief: he fell heavily into a chair. The furtive eyes wavered a moment, then scanned him again.

"Sir Henry Cobham was fain to see you," said the Secretary, lying blandly. He had his reward. Gray started.

"Sir Henry——" he cried; "Sir Henry Cobham has been here?" His cheeks turned red and white again in a moment. Sir John Maitland bowed.

"He asked for you last night," he said carelessly, and paused. "He grieved that he must depart ere he had seen you." Silence followed. An expert, the Master recognised a lie; his black eyes began to gleam; Greek met Greek.

"He would grieve sorely," said the Master. "Surely, Sir John, surely he left some word?" Sir John suppressed his imagination.

"Bade me give you his good-will—no more."

"Now that is strange," said the Master, artless as a child, and knitted his brows to think. "Faith, you

are right, Sir John, 'tis pity I came no sooner. But I supped with Lady Kinaldie last night." Sir John stared in amazement: he was being told the truth.

"Lady Kinaldie?" he cried. "A Papist spy!"

The Master laughed.

"Then, faith, she bears her task lightly. Is she? I do not know, nor care." Maitland shook his head.

"A friend of the whoredoms of Rome," he said piously. The Master shrugged his shoulders.

"It is possible—and irrelevant. She is a lady of great beauty. *Requiescat.* You sent for me?" Maitland lent over the table.

"Sir, a strange blow has fallen. . . . The Queen of England would put Mary to death." He said it softly, and his narrow brown eyes were set on Gray's face. On those haggard cheeks no muscle moved: the dark eyes were dull and inscrutable. The Master of Gray beheld the fields white unto harvest with what he had sown.

"'Tis a grave matter," said the Master. "What is charged?"

"No less than murder."

"Undone, it appears?"

"The King apprehends the matter vehemently."

"The King is of so high a spirit."

"Conceiving that it touches his honour."

"Whereof he is rightly careful."

"He asks how it may stand with his honour that he consent to kill his mother."

"'Tis a question hard to answer."

Their eyes met. Slowly on Gray's pale lips came a smile. A smile gleamed in Maitland's eyes.

"And yet——" he said very softly, tapping Gray's arm.

"*Mortui non mordent*," the Master murmured. Greek smiled at Greek more broadly.

"I need not tell you how she was discovered," said Maitland carelessly.

"But it would be interesting to hear," the Master suggested. And Maitland answered sharply :—

"Your own device." The Master contrived to laugh.

"In truth?"

"Gifford, beer-barrel—the whole design. I make you my compliments."

"Your approval is honour, Sir John." He rose, walked to the window and opened it. "Mary was in a plot to murder Elizabeth?"

"Art and part of that foul and infamous design," cried the Secretary in honest wrath. The Master turned and laughed in his face.

"Foul? Infamous? Oh, la, la, la. Honour among—friends. Who killed Darnley?" Sir John grew livid, and the Master laughed again. "Nay, keep the cant for the kirk. Well—when your blood is back—who were these impious creatures who sought to cut Gloriana's throat, and—" his voice fell low—"who must needs tell Mary?"

"Ballard, so one was named," Maitland stammered, still pale, "and Babington and Savage." And the Master through his teeth muttered :—

"Fools! Fools!"

"The proof," said Maitland, his colour returning, "the proof was ample—and for that you are to be thanked."

"The proof," said the Master, sneering, "the proof would be ample. Their letters have passed through Walsingham's clean hands—" then he saw Maitland eye him suspiciously—"I provided for that," he said, and he laughed. Maitland's thin lips curled and showed his teeth.

"Ay, you have lent her a hand to die," he said, and the Master laughed again.

"It appears," he said carelessly; but his eyes never wavered an instant from Maitland's face.

"And if she live——" said Maitland, slowly and softly. "If she live——" he repeated, watching the Master. "Well—she may remember."

"If she live, I shall have double harm," said the Master. "Them that trespass against her—she does not forgive them, *mordieu*. And I," he smiled amiably upon Maitland, "I have trespassed to some purpose. Eh, but what matter? She will not live. Gloriana, the devout Gloriana, will hew her in pieces before the Lord. And we—we shall live happily ever after. Your friend God—He will not suffer the righteous to be forsaken. No! *Tête de diable*, I have cast my bread upon the waters, and I find it after not so many days. I whet the axe for Gloriana, I anticipate high honour from that miraculous Virgin—whereof I will provide masses for Mary of the Kirk o' Field, Saint and Martyr by the grace of God and

of Patrick Gray; and my St. Mary o' Bothwell shall whisper in the Omnipotent Ear her thanks to poor faithful Patrick who crowned her with a heavenly crown!" His laugh made an apt ending. But all the while his glance was set on Maitland. Phrase after phrase of that noble speech rang harshly, and he saw a shudder pass over the thin face. Maitland looked at him askance. The Master achieved his victory. "For I," and he laughed again, "I am the Master of Gray!" Maitland drew a long breath.

"There is, however, the King," he said. Gray spread out his hands and smiled.

"He is doubtless inconsolable. The death of her who might be Queen of Scotland and England in his stead—eh, 'tis a grievous woe, Sir John."

"She is, however, his mother."

"And how she brought forth him—" cried Gray in a flash—"well, she was ever fruitful of blunders!"

"And it cannot stand with his honour—" the Master lay back and laughed softly; Maitland leant forward and touched his arm—"that he let her die—without protest made." At that Gray's laughter rang loud.

"O honourable son! O prudent chivalry! Nay, shame were that indeed—to let a mother die—without protest made!"

"Stern protest," said Maitland solemnly.

"Yet not too stern, Sir John?"

"God forbid," said Sir John piously, "that we should offend a Queen of the true faith!" And therewith Greek smiled at Greek.

"It will be a mission of some nicety," said the Master.

"Will you go on it?" said Maitland. The Master's hand hid his mouth.

"Why?" he said.

"None is so apt as you. Your wit, your address," he smiled slightly, "your beauty." He regarded the window. "Your good faith pledged to us, to Elizabeth, by so sure a bond——" The last words were spoken very slowly.

"The fact is," said the Master, in the manner of his honest cousin, honestly, "I dare not be Mary's friend. But," and he laughed, "I will protest, oh, I will protest till the last trump sounds."

"You estimate the affair," said Sir John, "exactly. Let us go to the King."

Greek smiled at Greek. Each deemed that the victory was his.

His Majesty King James was shuffling up and down his chamber.

"More of ye?" he cried. "De'il take ye, and I am no more than quit o' the loon Bothwell. Eh, my man," he plucked Maitland's sleeve, "and what tale do ye think I ha' had from Frankie? De'il burn him, the rascal told me to my teeth that if I let the English woman have her will, I merit to be hanged!" His Majesty chuckled. "Lord, man, but I told him I would provide for that. Eh, my bonny man"—he turned to Gray—"it was no fool's answer neither!"

"A kingly reply, sir," said the Master.

"Deed, and I think so myself," said his Majesty.

He giggled, looking at Gray, then suddenly his fat lip fell. "Eh, eh, sirs—*quæ sunt nobis undique angustiæ* (my man, we will have that in hand of writ for Elizabeth). Blast the fools to hell! E'en Angus must tell me the fool nobles will not brook that Elizabeth shall put her hands in my mother's blood. Meddling fools! If I can bide quiet, what for will they greet?" He shuffled up and down muttering: then stopped and looked sideways at Gray. "Maitland, man, ye ha' told him our purpose?" Maitland bowed. The King beckoned the Master to him and took his arm. "Ye must know our mind," he said, walking the Master to the window. "Ye see, we do esteem the true filiality to lie to the father, wherefore man is less bound in piety to the mother of him. Yet *jura sanguinis* will not have us imbrue our hands in a mother's blood. Ye will have in your mind—

> Agamemnonius scænis agitatus Orestes
> Armatam facibus matrem et serpentibus atris
> Cum fugit ultricesque sedent in limine Diræ.

Eh, my man, but Orestes, though the Furies—Erinyes, eh, my man?—were for torturing him for that he slew his mother, ye will ha' heard o' the play in Æschylus (and very ill is the text of it) where Minerva (and she was goddess o' wisdom, my man) holds him absolved. Eh, she would be a wise woman. So ye will see in the truth of it the law of piety and blood is not to hold nor to bind all matters. I would make it clearer to ye, my man, with——"

"Faith, sir, already 'tis clear as day," said the Master hurriedly. "Such is the light of your Majesty's exposition." The King chuckled.

"Eh, we ha' been thought to have some little o' the humanities . . . eh . . . eh. Well, my man: yet we must apprehend it vehemently. At the least of it, she is a Scottish woman. And it is to profane the sacred diadem—and contrarious to our honour. Ye will mind that? Contrarious to our honour. So that we can in no ways be a consenter to the deed. In no ways, ye will mind that?"

"Earnestly, sir; and speak it boldly!"

The King looked at him.

"Ye need not be over temerarious," he muttered. The Master bowed. "'Twas hot blood that wrought my mother's rack."

"You are warned thereby, sir."

"Deed, and I think I am," said his Majesty complacently. The Master bowed his assent. "So ye will handle it delicate. But the while, ye will not forget that she is my mother in blood and—" the goggle eyes looked sideways at the Master—"and if she fall, we must ha' our amend." The Master bowed again. "She is over close, is Elizabeth," said his Majesty thoughtfully. "Ye will put it clear, my man—since she is our mother, we must ha' our amend." The Master looked at him.

"I understand, sir," said he in a low voice.

"Very well, 'tis very well, my bonny man. An amend—and I do not say—we will e'en let Bothwell and Angus blow till they burst. Well, well—and 'tis

a sore world. Elizabeth is fool fond of her gold. We must ha' our amend. See to it . . . Sir John, my man, did ye hear where they killed the morn? No? De'il burn them, they will ha' had a braw run while I am mewed up here!"

## CHAPTER XXXIII.

### LIKE SCOTTISH MEN.

OUTSIDE the palace the Master of Gray stood still and faced the breeze and drew deep breaths of it. Then he sprang to the saddle and gave his horse the rein and galloped off. He bared his head, and the cool air set his curls tossing and blew about his temples. On and on he went, through the park and eastward away by the Ormiston road, till the rushing wind of that headlong ride brought blood to the white cheeks and light to his dull eyes.

Thundering down a hill he came, and saw climbing majestically a bulky man on a bulky horse.

"Logan!" cried the Master, reining up and making his horse skate on the greasy grass.

"Jehu! Son of Nimshi! You will be over his tail, Jehu, as you deserve." But the Master and his horse slid in due position up to Logan's nose and stopped. "Most romantic, Patrick," said the Laird of Restalrig, stretching out his great hand. But what do we do in romance?" and he pressed Gray's hand more than common hard. The Master laughed sadly, and Logan, still holding his hand, went on: "Patrick, have you heard a tale of Sidney?" he said gruffly.

"He is dead," said the Master, and looked away.

"Ay," growled Logan. "That was a man . . .

unlike us, Patrick." The Master said nothing. "So —rest him!—well, I heard, and I left my knaves to drink themselves sick on the Haddington ale, for I thought you would not be so fain to help that scraggy English Queen as you were to aid Sidney—so what now, Patrick? Am I to crimp for our bony Diana?"

"Is more to hear, Logan," said Gray. They looked at each other. "Elizabeth makes ready to execute Mary." Logan's cheeks grew purple.

"Devil burn her bones!" he roared. "A Scottish Queen to die in her claws!" and he swore mightily.

"'Tis my doing," said Gray quietly.

"You?" muttered Logan round-eyed — "you? How?"

"You remember—I took Gifford to Walsingham; showed them how to trap her. They have trapped her. For some clever fools have made her part of a plot to kill Elizabeth. Elizabeth resents that—the spotless Elizabeth."

Logan cried an oath: and then, "What a pox would she have? She keeps Mary in prison with no right at all. Does she count on kisses for her pains."

"She counts on the block, at the last—for she has proof enough that Mary sought to kill her."

"Who out of hell cares for that?" roared Logan.

"An English jury." Logan swore vehemently.

"Try her? Queen of Scots? Canting Englishmen?" The rest was blasphemy.

The Master of Gray laid his hand on Logan's bridle, and they began to move slowly back towards Dalkeith.

"Logan, you are barbaric. Listen to James, by the grace of God: 'If I can bide quiet,' saith his gracious Majesty, 'what for will you greet?' and reminds you that she is his mother. A Christian spirit has James."

"The fact is," Logan spluttered indignantly—"the fact is, he is a slug—a flabby, fat slug."

"Nay; I said in my haste that the King was a slug. 'Tis not so. He is truly careful of his honour. Not without protest will he let his mother be slain."

"Blast him," said Logan briefly.

"'Blessed are the meek,' O Logan. His Majesty is meek. His Majesty proposes to inherit the earth."

Logan stared and gasped. It was a commercial enterprise which transcended even Logan's morality. But the Master of Gray only laughed.

"And I go to strike this bargain," said he. At that Logan swore again.

"Patrick, Patrick, and are you blind? The dirty knave will send you to make his foul bargain and she will be slain, and bitter wrath there will be in Scotland for it. Then the cursed rogue King will have his lie ready—you betrayed her and him. And you, Patrick, you are not Sidney that men should laugh at the charge."

"If she die, men will think I have lent her a hand," said the Master. "I know it."

"*Ventre du Pape*, what else can they think? And you will suffer damnably. No, man, no, he will let her die, and throw the blame of it on his Envoy. Let him find another!" The Master laughed.

"My dear Logan, all the morning I have striven

to win the office." Logan stared. "Let another go —he will do the King's bidding over well. If I go, before God I go to save her if I can. Nay, faith, man, I am honest. If she may be saved, I will do it, and I only can."

"And what will you get by that?" said Logan. "The fact is, Patrick, she must hate you damnably. You brought her into this peril, and she would not forgive you for mere pulling her out. Why should she? No, by God, you are best out of it all! If you save her——"

"I make a staff for my own head, I know it," said the Master. "By heaven, the matter is hard. Live she, die she, 'tis ill for me. And yet I must go, for none may save her but me."

"'Tis an ill case," growled Logan sympathetically. "But why must you go?"

"Because I brought her to this pass," the Master muttered. "Ah, would to God I could get again bygones!" It was the old cry grown more bitter, more sincere.

"The fact is, Patrick," said Logan sagely, "the fact is, this is fool chivalry. It is a little late to become Bayard. You will only break your own bones. This dirty business will go on, and you will go to the devil. Let the coward James send one of his own slimy kind!"

"None other would save her. I must be a Scottish man," said the Master. His lips came together and his eyes gleamed. "I must be a Scottish man," he muttered.

"You must be a fool," growled Logan.

Then they rode back in silence to the town. Logan sat heavily, shoulders hunched and head hanging frowning down at the road. His cumbrous strong wit wrestled with the unexpected. But the Master of Gray sat erect and flung back his curls, and his dark eyes flashed, and he smiled.

"For you the harder fight, for you the strength to win it."

Those were the words that cried to him as he rode back in the sunlight. The lost honour was now to win again in a harder fight, a fight more perilous than ever Sidney had fought. Sidney had fallen gloriously; so too would he fall, if fall he must, not unworthily the friend of Astrophel. Twice in his life he had seen the heavenly vision; now, be the peril what it might, he would not be unfaithful to his love, to his friend. Then she came to him—the girl so strangely like his Queen betrayed—the cheeks like apple-blossom, the crown of russet hair, the slim lithe form. He held her beauty in his arms; he saw the trust in her wet dark eyes. That he had betrayed.

Ay, but her trust, her love, he might yet win them again. Win or fail, at least he would strike a blow for his lost honour. Fail? Harder tasks than this he had done in far worse cause. How should he fail now? All was not lost. Remained the resourceful wit, the courage, the charm. He was still the Master of Gray.

The Master of Gray must back to the fight. *Aymez loyaulté* must be his motto now. Here was a task worthy all his strength, such as he alone could do,

such as even she might praise and honour. Stronger and stronger grew his confidence, firmer and firmer his purpose. The resourceful wit, the courage, the charm—they were to work for his lady's sake, and they could not fail. No, *mordieu!* The Queen should be saved, his honour won again. Philip Sidney should have no shame of his friend; his lady forget that she had scorned him. Bygones he would get again. For he was the Master of Gray.

In this temper he rode southward straitly charged by the King to sell his mother at the highest possible price.

It was the night before he started, it was in the gloaming, and there came a visitor to Sir John Maitland, own brother to Lethington, Scotland's Machiavelli. Logan, black-browed and ruddy, Logan whose mere arm was like a weaver's beam, Logan bluff and rude of speech fronted the slim, pallid, politic Secretary, and was despised.

"You imply," said the Secretary, leaning back and contemplating his delicate finger tips, "that you desire to be bought?"

"Man, I have implied it for half an hour," cried the Laird of Restalrig.

"While I," said the Secretary calmly, "have wondered whether you are worth buying." Logan sprang up.

"Then you may wonder till you wake up whining in hell!" he cried, and clapped on his hat.

"But I think you are," said the Secretary calmly. "A hundred pounds—English?"

"Curse me if I sell my soul under two!"

"You are vain," said the Secretary. "One hundred —or I regret to have caused so much eloquence."

"Out with them," growled Logan.

"You are hasty," said the Secretary. "They shall be paid on your welcome return."

"And what warrant have I for that?"

"You have," said the Secretary, "my word." Logan laughed in his face.

"Take your word to hell and burn it! I am to spy——"

"On your cousin and friend," the Secretary suggested.

"Yes," cried Logan. "And curse me if I do it for nothing."

The Secretary drew the ink towards him, dipped a pen and wrote a few lines.

"Here is an earnest," said he. It was an order on the Treasury for fifty pounds. Logan read it carefully, dusted it, put it in his pouch. He grinned at Sir John.

"Now we are all happy," said he, and he went out.

As the door closed Sir John allowed himself to smile.

"A true Scottish soul," he murmured, and laughed aloud.

Now Logan had paused outside, and he heard that laugh. It made him grin once more.

## CHAPTER XXXIV.

### *POUR LOYAULTÉ.*

SIR FRANCIS WALSINGHAM was perplexed. It appeared necessary to believe in contradictions. So England were sufficiently generous, England might hang the Queen of Scots by head or heels. Such were the true sentiments of King James (learnt for a consideration from Maitland) reported by Sir Henry Cobham, a man not easily cheated. And behold—

"My master, King James, would rather yield his own life than offend in a point so highly touching his honour," cried the Master of Gray with flashing eyes. And Sir Francis saw Gloriana look at him angrily, for he had told her a different tale. While he wondered—

"Fully contrarious to his honour," said Sir Robert Melville, Gray's companion, a plain man, to whom the profundity of the King's diplomacy was not revealed.

"Ye rogues! Ye are both in a tale!" Gloriana blustered.

"It is not strange: we come on one errand."

"Ay, sirrah! To save my foes!"

"Nay, lady: to save you."

"Do you mock me, sirrah?" the Queen thundered. "God's death, who was it devised this trap at Chartley? I or you?"

"I, lady: for I have been and I am your friend."

Sir Robert Melville was staring at him. The Master played deep—as always. "I devised it—that you might learn her plans and know what you had to fear. Not, *mordieu*, that you should kill her and imbrue yourself in your own blood."

"Little man, little man, have a care! Are these threats of your master's mouth?"

"Lady, they are," said Sir Robert Melville; for Gray's last phrase was of James's own make. Gloriana stared at Walsingham.

"For he thinks it preposterous and strange that a Sovereign should be judged by subjects, a dangerous precedent——"

"Contrarious to his honour," said Melville of the faithful memory. That phrase repeated drew Walsingham's eyes. "Since God's holy ordinance will not suffer the sacred diadem to be profaned."

"God's death, sirrah, had I such a servant as your master has in you, he should to the block! By God's eyes, who is your master's truest friend? Who has borne him up since he was a babe in arms, saved him from his false murderess mother, who has ever aided him at need, I or another?"

"No other, lady," said the Master quickly.

"Lady, I am ever ready to risk my life rather than counsel my master ill," said Melville. "But he has not one faithful servant who would counsel him to let his mother perish."

"Nor your Majesty one true friend who would not risk your favour to forbid it," said the Master bowing.

Gloriana turned on him:—

"You, sirrah, you that betrayed her! God's wounds, what have you to make in this?"

"Nothing," said the Master, "nothing, as your Majesty should know best of all, save your safety and good. Ay, lady, of her ill designs I have told for your sake. Little thanks should I get from her or her friends for aught I might do now." Her Majesty smiled sourly.

"Little as you deserve, rogue." The Master bowed.

"'Tis so, lady. Doubt me how you will, for my own life's sake I dare be friend to none other than you. And friend to you I am and servant, and, true servant, I warn you not to run upon an evil fate." He paused, and Gloriana and he studied each other.

"An evil fate?" said Walsingham, watching him.

"Ay, Sir Francis: the which you doubtless have perceived and set before her Majesty."

"It would be a blemish for your Majesty to devoid from your accustomed clemency and the natural mildness of your sex," said Melville innocently. A smile gleamed in Gray's eyes and Gloriana flushed.

"Mildness, sirrah? God's eyes, can I play with tenderness like a milkmaid? I think of my realm."

"Lady, so also do I," cried the Master, "and for the sake of that realm, dearer to you than—than life, I conjure you, take heed. See—you have condemned her, justly—I do not say now. You may do execution, justly—I do not judge. But *cui bono?* who gets the fruit of it? You will gladden the hearts of your Puritans with their brothers in Christ who are dinging their pulpits to flinders while they howl for

her blood. Their holy aid you will gain, their gracious favour. Ay, and what more? You madden the Catholics—oh, but the Catholics have growled and plotted long years. You anger France—but France may have enough to do at home. Ay, lady, and Spain? What of Spain? King Philip would not strike to make Mary queen. You kill Mary—will not Philip strike for himself. She that hindered is taken out of the way, and down upon you come Parma's Walloons, Armadas of the Indies surge up Channel in a new crusade for the Catholic Church and Philip King of Spain and England—by the grace of God and Elizabeth. Well, you will have your Puritans, lady. It will be gratifying to fall in their cause." Walsingham strove to intercept Gloriana's glance, and failing, made a mistake.

"Their cause is the cause of all," he said sharply. The Master started and turned: amazement was written large on his face. From Walsingham he looked again to the Queen. Then he bowed gravely.

"Since that is your Majesty's mind," he said, "we can no more. The politic of the pulpit is to rule: so be it then. One last word, lady—remember in the ill days that will come, I, who have been, who would be still your true servant, warn you before God this murder—" his eyes were bright and fierce—"ay, lady, this murder will aid you nothing, will but raise foes more bitter with a stronger leader."

"*Potius vindicta quam justitia!* 'Tis revenge not justice," cried Melville, borne away by the Master's fervour.

"You forget your place!" cried Walsingham. The Master turned on him.

"We remember our duty, sir. With us, Sir Francis, with us the one thought is the safety and amity of two realms. We do not bow before a madman in a Geneva gown!" Sir Francis flushed; he had not anticipated a rating from the Master of Gray. But Gloriana chuckled.

"Thou hast it, Francis," said Gloriana. "Your rogue chaplain bade you hew her in pieces before the Lord, they tell me. God's passion, sirrah, take order with that knave lest a worse thing befall him! Now," she smiled upon the Master, "come sit, *mon lièvre.* Give him a chair, Francis. Now, tell me, *mon lièvre,*" she caressed him, "what claim has Philip to strike for himself?" The Master lied with aplomb and grace.

"She has bequeathed to him her rights," he said, and he smiled. "Do you wonder, lady, we pray you for your own sake and our master's to spare her? Dead she does you much harm. Alive—why what harm has she done yet?"

"She has but kept us all in fear for twenty years," said Walsingham.

"Fear, yes, and no more than fear. And now, now that she has seen death very close, the block imminent for her pains, is it like she will risk it again? I will swear you may have all assurance from her, from her kin, so this deed be not done. But," and his eyes grew fierce again, "if done it be, who shall hold her friends, who shall bind Spain? My master,

is ever faithful—but can he stay her friends on the border? An Armada in the Channel, Parma at the straits, and the Hamiltons fall on Newcastle, and Bothwell and Buccleuch strike at Carlisle—who shall stay them? Howard? Percy? Dear friends are they, *pardieu*, to the brethren in the Lord!"

"God's passion, sirrah, do you threaten?" Gloriana thundered.

"Are they threats, then? Nay, lady; if that day come, 'twill be ill enough for me. Mary's friends are not like to spare me, I think."

"You play the coward?" Gray shrugged his shoulders.

"I am afraid," he said, "for I see clear. And yet, lady," he laughed, "I hold life light as any man alive. And I dare, what it seems others, your friends, dare not," his eyes wandered to Walsingham, "to front you, to brave your anger, for your own sake," his voice fell low, he pressed her hand gently, his dark eyes grown tender looked up at her thin rouged cheeks, "for you to whom I have given my honour in pledge, you who may shame me at your will for the service I have done, you, my true Queen."

"*Mon lièvre*," said Gloriana gently, playing with his fingers. But her brow was heavy and her eyes dull and unseeing. "We will consider," she said at last, and she rose. The Master knelt and Melville, and she passed slowly, her face sombre in thought, to the door. Walsingham lingered. "Attend us, Francis," she said sharply, and Walsingham, with one unloving look at the Master, followed her out.

Melville looked at the Master, and the Master smiled with lips and eyes.

"Let Walsingham trump that," he whispered gaily, and he took Melville's solemn arm and marched off.

"*En avant*, Sir Robert," he cried gaily, "*en avant*." Sir Robert was obviously thoughtful.

"But sir—your pardon, but her Majesty said——"

"I laid the trap. *Mordieu*, that did I; and therefore am he who will break it," and he laughed. But Melville stared at him distrustful. The less agile mind toiled after him in vain.

Merrily, none the less, the Master returned to his lodging. He observed the absence of Logan. Hugh Brown reported the coming of a letter and the retirement of Logan to his own room. At the door of that room appeared Logan's head.

"Ha, Patrick, what sport?"

"The fish considers the fly," said the Master of Gray. Logan whistled.

"The fool fish," he said impartially. "And you think——"

"I do think, Logan," said the Master.

"*Ventre du Pape*—and what of the old snake, Walsingham?"

"His fangs are drawn," said the Master.

"Oho, oho," Logan growled, and looked at him curiously. The Master laughed and passed on.

Logan returned to his labours—the epistles of Restalrig. One was a naïve letter to Sir John Maitland, stating that contrary to all expectation the

Master was entirely faithful to—Mary. The other was a proposal of a commercial character, and made to Sir Francis Walsingham the offer of interesting information about the Master of Gray.

Logan had a mind free from prejudice.

## CHAPTER XXXV.

### THE DEVICES OF THE CRAFTY.

GLORIANA considered: Gloriana continued to consider: and the while she avoided the Master of Gray. The Master chafed and the days went by.

Babington, Ballard, all the company of fools who had wrought their own ruin and Mary's, were sent to their paradise by way of Tyburn tree. All, save one or two whom Sir Francis Walsingham treasured and tortured with care—hapless wretches who were valuable alive. The foreign gentlemen had sought their own lands in some haste; only a few lay like M. de Biran in the sanctuary of an ambassador's house, praying the Virgin diligently for a chance to injure some one.

Still in the hour of death Mary's courage rose indomitable. They bade her beg for pardon. She said that she was an anointed Queen, and a Queen she would die. They took from her her canopy of state, and there on the wall in the place where the Scottish arms had hung she set a crucifix. She was to fall in the quarrel of her faith: to that faith she would be true to the last. To Guise, her cousin, she wrote that her faith should be sealed by her blood. To Philip of Spain—so well had the Master known her when he lied—she bequeathed her claim to the twin

thrones. To Gloriana she wrote one last letter. A trap had been set, she said, a plot laid against her life, though doubtless her dear sister knew it not—her sister who had doubtless forgotten the proffer and the pledge given long years ago of safety and honour in England. And Gloriana continued to consider. And the Master of Gray chafed inactive. And M. de Biran and Father Holt, lurking together under Châteauneuf's roof, in continued frenzy, prayed for vengeance. And the epistles of Restalrig were marvellously multiplied.

So Christmastide came and passed, and the new year began ere it was told to the Master of Gray that the Queen would give him audience once more. In all his best he arrayed himself—the russet velvet, lined and piped with gold, beloved of his heart, and he and Melville, sombre and solemn, waited on Gloriana.

In the pale winter sunshine they rowed down stream to Greenwich. Once more the Master of Gray saw the place where he had bidden farewell to Astrophel sailing on his last voyage. The tide was out. All around him the river lay dark and still. Dull grey mud banks stretched for many a yard on the northern shore. On the hill behind the palace the trees stood bare and gaunt. The Master shivered, looked eagerly at the landing stage, and when they came to it sprang hurriedly out of the wherry.

They were admitted at once, and the Master swept one quick glance round and wondered. Here was Gloriana, indeed, but Gloriana in her chair of state. Gloriana, indeed; but Leicester stood beside her chair,

and Burghley and Walsingham a little behind. Hatton was there, and Davison and Howard of Effingham —a galaxy of bright colours and jewels and grim faces and flashing eyes.

"Your Majesty honours us too much," said the Master, falling on one knee and striving to kiss her hand. She snatched it away.

"Up, knave," she growled. And the Master rising saw Walsingham smile at him. Melville and he looked at each other. It appeared that Gloriana had considered.

"And you, sirrah," cried Gloriana, turning on Melville, "are you still in the same tale?"

"I still do my master's bidding," said Melville.

"God's passion! Wilt lie to me again?" Gloriana thundered, banging her fist on the arm of the chair. "Little knave, you know you are false."

"False am I not," cried Melville. "And, lady, while I do my master's will, I fear nought else." The Master stepped forward:—

"In our master's name we have warned you once of murder, lady. Of murder——" Leicester sprang forward.

"Silence, ye foul rogue!" The Master of Gray laughed in his face.

"Not now are we at Cumnor—not now is it question of Mistress Robsart." Leicester lifted his hand and found it in Gray's fierce grip. "Pray God for a better conscience, my lord!" Gloriana was on her feet.

"God's death! Let knaves be, my lord! And you, rogue—to your knees." The Master bowed.

"I could not go before my lord," he said quietly, fronting her. And in a moment: "And I, lady, I who rate a woman's life higher than my lord of Leicester, I do my master's bidding and warn you do no murder on her who trusted herself to you—" Hatton and Howard and Leicester sprang on him, their hands to their swords, and the Master laughed at them and made an easy gesture—"though these gallant gentlemen bid you." Gloriana laughed harshly.

"Let the knave be, my lords," and she scowled at him. "And you, sirrah," she turned to Melville, "do you tell me still you speak your master's mind?"

"I swear it before God," said Melville: truly enough, for the designs of the gentle King were known only to that apt confidant, the Master of Gray.

"And so I swear," said the Master, since it was necessary. Walsingham smiled upon him.

"That increases our confidence vastly," said he.

"You lie, knaves, and you know you lie!" Gloriana blustered. "Well, your master knows her guilt and will not stir to save her."

"Lady, praise God for your councillors' wits!" cried the Master. "No, lady, he will not stir, nor France, nor Spain. Faith, envoys are on the road even now to thank your Majesty for her gracious justice. Sir Francis hath heard of them. They were announced from the pulpit last Sabbath, when they likened your Majesty to Jael who slew her guest."

"Will you bear this, lady?" cried Leicester.

"Ay, this and more," cried the Master—for he saw

in violence his one hope. "Ay, this and more will she bear! No man of the Catholic faith but will see in her murder now a deed just and too long delayed. No Catholic king but will strain every nerve to drag her down, and Spain will grasp at Mary's bequest and launch her Armadas. Sir Francis and his brethren in the Lord shall sail to meet them with a black Geneva gown for their flag. Alack for the black gown! Down it falls, and in comes Santa Cruz with Parma at his heels—*Hic jacet Jael infelix!*" He stopped for breath and sprang back before Howard's sword. "Alack for the Puritan chivalry," he cried. "Nay, good my lord," he caught a thrust in his cloak, "wilt need it all on one who will fight." He wrenched the rapier from Howard's hand and dropped it and stamped on it and broke it. "An ill omen, *mordieu!*"

Melville looked at him in amazement. The other men had come between him and the Queen, roaring together—

"The guard! The guard!"

"O brave!" cried the Master laughing. Alone he fronted them all, empty-handed against the bare flashing swords. "O noble cause! Noble knights, what is one death more or less? Never shrink from it. Ye brethren in the Lord that hound a woman to death, will you spare an unarmed man? Never, 'twere shame!" He walked upon the rapier points and felt them give before him. Ever his eyes sought Gloriana; Gloriana was smiling. Still he pressed on their points, and she cried:—

"Down, down, my lords!" The guard came scurrying in, and Gloriana sprang up, tall, thin, blazing with jewels. There was blood under the rouge now. "Out knaves," she thundered, and the guard slunk back. "A pretty play, rogue," she said, and smiled at the smiling Master. Then the smile passed and her face grew grim. "With a prettier end," she said through her teeth. She blew on a silver whistle.

The door behind her opened. Four servants brought in a man in a chair. His face was white and thin, as of one worn by a wasting sickness: about the mouth and the sunken eyes deep lines of pain were marked. His hands and his feet shook, and clattered against the chair, and he had no power over them. His wrists were swollen wide as his hands. And the Master of Gray grew pale.

"I introduce Father Edmund Hay," said Sir Francis Walsingham, and he bowed and smiled to the Master of Gray. Gloriana waved her lords aside that she might enjoy the workings of the Master's pale face. She laughed at him.

"So, rogue. Is't pretty?" she said, and the Master shuddered. "Poor tender heart!" cried her Majesty, and turned on her other victim. "Speak, rascal!" she thundered. The priest's eyes were wild, and he tried to rise.

"He is the knave!" he cried, and shrieked with pain, and fell back in his chair. The Master trembled, and Hatton drew aside biting his lip.

"None doubts it, my father," said Gloriana.

"Not even the knave," said Walsingham. "Speak!" and he turned with a threatening gesture on the priest.

"He devised it—in Paris—" the words were broken with groans—"the whole plot—Elizabeth with a cut throat—dagger for Burghley and Walsingham—snatch Mary from prison—a border rising—the whole, the whole!" and he groaned. "The knave sold us, sold us!"

"He has sold many. Art in good company, my father," said Gloriana, and laughed.

"But the Master of Gray hastes to give you the lie," said Walsingham. And the Master could not turn his eyes from that tortured body. He saw again the upper room in Paris, heard his own voice again as he gaily planned murder and revolt. The past rose and beat him down. He trembled, and his lips moved and made no sound. The lie would not come.

"He cannot, he cannot!" cried the priest. "A curse—a curse—the Judas curse——"

"The spirit moves in the man of God," said Gloriana. "Take him away, Francis." Sir Francis smiled at the Master.

"A moment," he said. "Father Hay will tell us how he came to speak." Father Hay looked at him and groaned. "Speak!" said Walsingham harshly, and the priest looked at him askance like a dog who fears a blow, and shrank back in his chair.

"You told me—you told me—he was your Queen's favour—favourite—friend." Walsingham laughed at him.

"Nay, surely. You mistake, my holy father. Or perhaps 'twas I. For I should have said he was Mary's man, and pleading for Mary's life, and had prevailed but for your kind aid."

"I—I——" the priest shrieked.

"You were very obstinate; but you have been very useful." Walsingham bowed to him mockingly.

"*Deus—Deus—miserere!*" The tortured hands were flung to heaven; the shriek rang shrill. Gloriana laughed.

"The spirit moves powerfully. Take him away, Francis." Father Edmund was borne out sobbing. "We await," said Gloriana, "the imminent lie." Dark eyes glowed in the white face, but the Master of Gray said nothing. Speedily Gloriana was angry. "God's death, and you would heap your threats on me, rogue! You that sought my death —and took my gold! You that taught the woman murder must plead for her! Splendour of God, rogue, 'tis well for you you are envoy, you and your fellow-knave! Hear me, sirrah! We give you a day to be gone, and so I catch you again—bah, knave, out on you. Go!" But the glowing eyes met hers.

"I go," said the Master of Gray. "But before God, I had rather be the woman you murder, ay, *mordieu*, had rather be myself, traitor and liar, than you—you!" and his lip curled, and scorn rang fierce in his voice, and he laughed in her face and turned away and strode clattering down the hall.

"God's death——"

"Your Majesty speaks of God!" cried Melville, and bowed and turned on his heel.

"Rogues, rogues all!" said the Imperial Votaress laughing. Walsingham chuckled.

But her lords looked at each other. Her Majesty's methods were royal.

## CHAPTER XXXVI.

### *AVE ATQUE VALE!*

"THE fact is, you have failed. *Ventre du Pape*, what did you expect?" The Laird of Restalrig spoke comfortable words to his cousin, who sat staring into the fire. Over him, looking down upon him, stood Sir Robert Melville. Melville touched his shoulder, for the Master had spoken nothing since he flung his taunt at Gloriana.

"Sir, their priest—did he speak true?" For the third time the question was asked. The Master looked up at him, and the glare of the fire reddened his pale cheek, shone tawny in his eyes.

"Ay—true," he said.

"My God!" Melville muttered, dazed at the whirl of treachery.

"O—God!" said the Master with a shrug.

"Why—why in God's name did you come?" cried Melville. "With another I might have saved her." The Master of Gray looked up and laughed.

"As our master desired," said he, and he laughed again. Melville shrank away from him, and Gray caught his arm. It was something then to touch an honest man. "Sir Robert, Sir Robert, have I done for her what a man might? Have I made myself foes where I had friends? Have I set all on her cause?"

"It is true," said Melville wondering.

"Ay, it is true. And the King bade me let her die, bade me sell her life as high as I could." Melville turned pale. "It is why I came—lest another should do his will."

"The fact is, Patrick, you are a fool," said Logan. But Melville stared at the Master and his jaw fell.

"He was false to her—to his mother?" he stammered.

Logan produced his simile.

"Like a slug, curse me, Sir Robert, a flabby—fat—slug." But Melville looked at the Master incredulous.

"What have you gained in it?" he asked: he believed that he knew the Master.

"You have seen," said the Master of Gray, and stared still at the fire. Logan pointed to him, and smiled upon Melville a small contemptuous smile.

"The fact is, he is beat—and 'tis damnably unpleasant."

Suddenly the Master sprang up and ran out. They heard him shout down the stairs for his horse. Then he looked into the room again.

"Ride on, you! I follow," he cried, and was gone.

Logan looked at Melville.

"Oho, oho! It seems he will be playing a game," said the Laird of Restalrig, and Melville, who had a plain man's horror of the worthy pair, looked at him and answered:—

"I ride north in an hour."

"*Ventre du Pape*, and so do I," cried Logan. "And 'twill be full time." He chuckled consumedly, and

Melville turned away. "Sir Robert, good Sir Robert —a boon! The Latin for rope—*funus—na—num?* What is it?"

"*Funis*, sir. Why in——"

"*Funis?* Thousand thanks! Your pardon! I indite a composition!" He ran out.

In the mind of Sir Robert theories clashed impotently.

As the clocks in the city were striking noon a man spurred away through Southwark and out by the Guildford road. On he went apace, over the hard white highway, up hill and down, drawing rein here and there to ask for a village called Pyrford.

Twilight was falling ere he halted before a little red manor house, set on a hill amid the heather; and the Master of Gray looked round and saw the dark waves of it rolling away into the mist.

In a great hall, dark panelled, gloomy and chill, Sir Henry Cobham stood before him, stately and tall, black-garbed as old and said nothing.

"I am here to ask your aid," said the Master: the old man's lip curled. "Not for myself, sir. You know I betrayed Mary to your Queen. You know, doubtless, I laid a trap, and Walsingham caught her in it, so that they have, or deem they have, proofs of her guilt and would kill her—her whom your Queen with no right has kept in prison long years. I have come to England to plead for her——"

"It was expected," said the old man. The Master started.

"Pleading for her I have ruined myself here, I have

ruined myself at home. It matters not. I was ruined before. Your Queen will not heed me, and thereby, thereby she digs a pit for herself."

"Not heed you? It must wound you."

"Do I care for myself?" cried the Master. Sir Henry laughed. "Ay, sir, Walsingham has found a priest and tortured him till the poor wretch said 'twas I that laid this fool's plot wherein Mary is engaged, and I am discredited and can do nought. And yet, sir, and yet I am right, and not these fanatic Puritans, and you must see it. Oh, your Queen may kill Mary—and then? Mary is a feeble foe, but Mary dead leaves her rights to Spain, and you must fight Spain's Armadas. Sir Henry, you can win Elizabeth's ear—tell her in God's name, tell her the truth, 'tis a crime and a blunder. At the best, 'twill smirch her fame for ever. At the worst, 'tis ruin for her and her realm."

"And so says our dear love, Lady Kinaldie." The blood left the Master's flushed cheeks.

"Lady Kinaldie?" he stammered. The old man laughed.

"O knave, knave, am I to help you to your light o' love?"

"I swear before God I have loved one woman only in all my life—'tis your daughter." The old man made a step forward and seemed as if he would strike. Then he laughed shortly.

"My daughter, thank God, is dead."

"Dead?" the Master screamed, and he reeled and stumbled and fell on his knees by the table, and hid

his face in his hands. Above him sounded the harsh, pitiless voice of grief.

"Console yourself: she knew of your new happiness ere she died. Her death—it will gratify you in your own hour—was welcome to her." The Master's shoulders shook, and the old man stood looking down at him. "Fie, sir, this is weakness unworthy of you. My servant will show you out." His steps echoed in the hall, and the Master lifted a wan shuddering face and watched him go. Slowly, painfully he rose as a servant came in, and to him the Master ran.

"Your mistress—how did she die?" he muttered. The man's eyes grew wide.

"Ye knoo her, master?"

"Ay," said the Master, and his eyes fell. The man's face worked.

"It was wunnerful," he said. "None of us knows how mistress came to it. On the day after master come back out o' Scotland it was. It was wunnerful." He shook his head in amazement. "Wunnerful, Master."

"Yes, yes, but how?"

The man smacked his lips, and began to speak in the high level voice of the heath country:—

"Ye see, master, 'twere the day arter Sir Henery he come back fro' the North"—he laid hold of Gray's sleeve, and Gray turned aside and hid his face. "An' she had a long talkin' wi' he in the mornin', an' arter, she says, says she, she will go ridin' alone. An' Sir Henery he kissed she, an' I thought I did see as she were pale like. She 'ld not have none o' Willum.

So Willum he med obeejunce to she, an' come back to kitchen. An' she went athurt an' across common an' —soil 'e, master, but she knoo it ever sence she were little maid so high"—he made a gesture as the Master started and turned wild eyes on him. "Bless 'e, that be holy teruth! Ay! But she never come back not to no dinner! No! So Willum he goes for to look for she, un' Willum he finds she in t' old gravel hole. Ay! Fair crushed she be, master, Lord soil she! So Willum he puts his knife to the mare, for she be all jelly wise an' tryin' to crawl, poor soul, poor soul!" A tear for the mare was wiped away. "But bless 'e, mistress she be lyin' theer, and the blood be wettin' her hair an' in her eyes like, all red, an' she be bent, Willum do tell, terrible. But Willum he do tell she smiled at he (she was allus fond on Willum, ye do see) an' never no groan. An' Willum he goes for to call to Henery, an' Willum an' Henery they do go for to lift she on a watty hurdle. But she says, says she to they, it be well as it be, and they ben't to hanker arter movin' o' she, she bein' far gone an'—an'—an' pleased, Willum do tell. But Willum he be fore-right, and he brings she to home, and she never spoke to nobody, master. Bein' dead afore, do 'e see. An' when I seed she, she be smilin'." The Master was gnawing his under lip. "Now Sir Henery, he 'ld not have no gran' funeral doin's for she, an' Pa'son Dane he buries she quiet like away to Pyrford. It was a wunnerful doin', master." He shook his head solemnly at Gray. "Lord bless 'e, an' ye be all white for hearin' of it, like to Willum when he brought she

to home. Ay, ay, I allus do say it be a wunnerful tale like I tells it."

Down the hall strode the Master of Gray, and his moustache was flecked with blood. The servant scurried after him.

"Mare be ready for 'e an'——" In the doorway the Master turned:—

"Where is she buried?" he said sharply.

"Take the track to Ripley an' ye will come to Pyrford Church, by foot o' t' sheep walk. She be burried on t' edge o' the hill, north'ard like. Good journey to 'e, master." The Master drew a ring from his finger and gave it. Clicking his heels together the gaping servant bowed and held the door. The Master went out to the night.

Weary man and weary horse came over the heath. The wooden church tower glistened grey in the moonlight: over the river and the river meadows hung a cloak of silver mist, and behind the hills rose dark. The horse was tied in the shadow of the giant yew, and the Master of Gray stumbled across the little churchyard. Sheer on the edge of the sand cliff a white cross shone in the moonlight; beneath it was a wreath of heather, pink and grey, lying on the brown earth.

To
May Cobham.

The Master spelt it out painfully, then flung himself down on the grave muttering her name.

The death of his love, the death of his Queen, he had wrought them both, and he knew it. All that

could claim his loyalty were betrayed. To trust him brought ruin and shame. He was the Master of Gray. The admired resourceful wit, the courage, the charm—under the brown earth lay the fruit of them all. Smiling she died: there was no help but in death for one who had loved him. And he lay on the grave in the moonlight writhing.

Once his hand went to his dagger, once he had a romantic vision of himself lying, an unworthy sacrifice, in his blood on her tomb. It appeared on reflection inept. He had, he perceived, no right even in death to link his name with hers. No right to claim her then or thereafter. No right to hope for her presence when he had passed through the door of death. No hope there was left, no happiness in life or death. The one thing, sought at the cost of all else, her love, he was never again to win. And she, his lady, he had driven her to pain and shame and death. Indeed, he was the Master of Gray. That resourceful wit and the courage and charm, oh, glorious prize they had won! He lay there groaning, while thought and memory wracked him. And still, and still his life must go on.

He kissed the earth and the wreath and the cross and rose in the darkness and stumbled away. The moon had set: the stars glittered in the dark sky. So he left her lying amid the heather under the north star.

Northward all next day he rode, away from the land of disaster. It is strange that he caught Logan no farther gone than St. Albans. But in the morning

had happened a thing stranger far. In the very window of the Queen's own room at Greenwich had been found a packet. Gloriana ordained that it should be opened. It held a letter. Gloriana ordained that the letter should be read.

This is what she heard :—

"*Fruere pro funere fune*—a rope for your murder.

To Jesabell that English heure:
Receyue this Scottis cheyne
As presagies of her great malheure
For murthering of our Queyne."

"And here is a little cord of hemp tied halter wise," said her waiting-woman, and held it up.

Gloriana boxed her ears.

"God's passion!" she roared. "Nay, fool. Send me Master Davison."

Master Davison came: Master Davison departed and came again: Master Davison brought the warrant for Mary's execution. Gloriana signed it, and bade him send it straightway to the prison.

Master Davison departed bowing. The Laird of Restalrig had indited better than he knew.

## CHAPTER XXXVII.

### "IN THE LIVERY OF A MARTYR."

IT was done: murder, justice, crime, duty—the thing was done at last. Gloriana's hand had fallen. Mary of Scots was free. No more to be betrayed—no more to struggle with hope deferred—no more to plead for her right, her fame, her life, before those who sought greedily for all—Mary Stuart had taken her cause to a just tribunal at last.

Gloriana turned to a task yet more congenial. It remained to convince the world that the deed was no deed of hers. So she fell into deep grief of mind. She rebuked her council exceedingly. She protested by God's passion that Mr. Secretary Davison had betrayed her. To King James in his mourning she wrote a wonderful letter. God, said Gloriana, and many others, could witness her innocency in the matter. Nor if she had commanded the deed would she ever deny it. She was not so faint-hearted that for terror she should fear to do the thing which was just, nor so base nor unnobly minded.

Thus Gloriana, seeking peace and ensuing it, and casting as a pledge of good faith Master Davison into the Tower. Post-haste she sent her letter, but while her cousin Robert Carey was still galloping north over

the wet roads, gentle King James gave audience to the Master of Gray.

In the little room where Mary had seen her servant Rizzio butchered, her son debated the matter of her death.

"Ye did not come to us last night?" said his Majesty sharply, looking sideways at Gray.

"Sir Robert Melville would tell you our fortunes, sir," said the Master.

"Your misfortunes, eh, my man?" his Majesty chuckled; for his mother was safely dead. "Eh, eh, and so he did. It seems ye ha' pleaded for our mother with much gravity. Well, well, 'tis a sore world. An' yet the woman has killed her. *Heu pietas, heu prisca fides*—which is to say, my man, we are sorely wronged."

"Queen Mary is dead."

"It must grieve us sore. Eh, eh." His Majesty wiped his mouth. "And Robin Melville, he told us ye had been very earnest an' faithful for her." His Majesty's goggle eyes twinkled. "Eh, my man, it was over late."

"Too late, sir."

"Well, well. An' we must a' die. *Ire tamen restat quo divus Ancus*——" His Majesty took the Master's arm and began to shuffle with him about the room, two paces long and broad, the while his fingers fumbled with his points. "Ye did not forget our charge, my man?"

"Charge, sir?" The King stopped and stared a moment; his eyes fell before Gray's wondering gaze.

"Our charge, my man. Ye will not ha' forgot. It is highly contrarious to our honour."

"So I said to her Majesty."

"An' what would she answer?"

"She laughed." The King's fat lips fell apart.

"De'il blast her!" he muttered; and shuffled to and fro while the fat lips shook. At last: "Well, well, my man—but ye will not ha' come back ἄπρακτος —which is to say, ye'll ha' done our errand." The ugly face peered cunningly up at Gray.

"Errand?" said the Master very quietly. "Sir, I did what a man might to save your mother. Pleading for her I have made old friends foes in England. Withal I have failed."

"Very fair an' honorific, my man. But that will not be the whole of it?" Again the cunning look.

"That is the whole of it," said the Master of Gray.

"But, man, man, ye'll not have forgot our charge?" cried the King, dropping his arm and staring at him.

"I remembered," said the Master in a low voice, "I remembered that it was my duty to save your mother," and he looked the King in the eye.

"But our amend?" cried his Majesty in despair.

"The price of your mother's blood," said the Master. At last the King flushed.

"De'il take ye!" he roared. "My man, ye'll ha' betrayed us!" And the Master laughed. "Ye rogue, ye devil's bairn, ye knew our will, ye——" A tap at the door silenced him. Maitland came in, Maitland of downcast eye and silent step.

"Sir, the Council waits," he said.

"De'il burn the Council!" roared the King. "Eh, ye knave—" he shot a malign glance at Gray—"lend us your arm, my man." Maitland gave it dutifully. He had no glance for the Master. They went out to the audience chamber and the Master followed at their heels.

The great lords were met around the board, Angus and Huntly, Morton and Bothwell and Buccleuch. There was a dull roar of angry talk as the King entered: flushed faces and angry eyes turned on him and his friends as the lords rose from their places to the din of clattering swords.

His Majesty shuddered slightly.

"De'il blast the steel," he muttered; and aloud, "God save ye, my lords." There was no answering greeting. He shot timid, wavering glances all round and grew pale, and his hands trembled on the table as he lowered himself heavily into his chair. The lords sat down with another clash of steel, and the Master of Gray slipped to his place at the foot of the board. On either side his neighbours drew away, and at once the Earl of Bothwell sprang to his feet.

"We demand your tidings," he said gruffly, and sat down again. There was a deep murmur of assent, and again the clink and clash of steel as they leant forward together, and the circle of fierce eyes set on the gentle King. The King shivered.

"My lord, my lord, this is out of all order," said Maitland smoothly. "Please——"

"I do not please," cried Bothwell. "I speak not to

you. I ask the King—how stands it with the Queen of Scots?"

"We——" said Maitland.

"By God! are you the King's lips?" Bothwell roared.

"Ye will see, my lords," said the King timidly, looking round for a friendly face. "Ye will see, my lords, we are much distraught—the while the matter lies still in the uncertain——"

"That is false!" Bothwell cried, and started to his feet.

"My good lord——"

"False, by the blood of God!" The King edged his chair back creaking, and he glanced quickly to right and left. Angus rose and stood over him.

"Do you know the truth?" he said angrily.

"Oh, my lord, I swear I ha' told you all I knew. And what more could I do. Indeed, indeed, my lords, I could do no more for ye."

"Please you to hear more?"

"What ye will, my lord! God knows my heart, I——"

"Let him come!" cried Bothwell.

The door opened, and at once the Master of Gray fell back in his chair. His face was white as marble and he bit his lip. There came in M. de Biran, and he bowed low. His face was worn and haggard. He saw the Master and shot at him a glance of hate. The King peered curiously.

"And who will he be?" he muttered. M. de Biran bowed again.

"I am Philippe de Biran, sire," he said in English. "I come from M. de Châteauneuf, the ambassador of my master to England. I bring you, sire," his voice fell, "the worst tidings. Her Majesty the Queen of Scots has fallen a martyr to the Catholic faith." He bowed his head and crossed himself.

The lords were looking fiercely on the King; but the King only nodded his head to and fro.

"Eh, eh," he muttered. It was Maitland who contrived to cry in angry surprise—

"They have dared to murder her? When? How?"

The Master of Gray smiled.

"It was on Wednesday a week. At Foderingay—in the hall. There, sire, before the block they tried to make her change her faith and she would not." The pale cheeks flushed, the shrill voice gained power. "She prayed for our Holy Father, she prayed for the Church, she prayed, sire, for you, her son."

"She would die well," said his Majesty.

"God send us all such a death!" cried Biran. "Sire, on that black scaffold she bade her ladies '*Adieu au revoir*,' and smiled on them, and laid her head upon the block and said, '*In manus, Domine, tuas commendo animam meam*'. Twice they must strike her that she might be the more glorified. And the soul of that rare and queenly martyr was borne in the arms of saints to the bosom of the Mother of God." He crossed himself again. There was silence a moment, then a rattle of oaths.

"God deliver them to hell! Shall we bear it?" roared Bothwell. "What, my lords! 'Tis boot and

saddle now, and hey for the border line." Buccleuch and Hamilton sprang to their feet.

"A word and we ride!"

"Liddesdale and Teviotdale——"

"And devil aid Scrope and that lying——"

"The foul fiend seize her! We will grill their English bones in Newcastle and Carlisle!"

"That will we!" Hands rang together with loud oaths.

Then shrill above all rose Maitland's voice:—

"My lords, my lords! we have been betrayed!"

"Betrayed?" They echoed him, turned and stared at him. The long thin white forefinger pointed straight at the Master of Gray—the Master cowering, pale-faced in his chair.

"There is the traitor," said Sir John Maitland.

The border lords turned on him.

"You? Devil's whelp," roared Bothwell. The Master of Gray rose to his feet, and he smiled.

"Traitor, am I—no more no less than Sir John Maitland," he said quietly.

"Were you not bidden plead for her?" cried Maitland.

"I was. To plead with discretion."

"Discretion?" roared Bothwell.

"My man, ye're lying, ye're lying sore," cried the King.

"You had your instructions—in hand of writ," said Maitland.

"Ay, and by word of mouth." Again he smiled.

"Confirming them, my lords, I swear, merely con-

firming them and fortifying them, as my wont would be well. Ye will know, my lords, the spoken word 'tis aye more powerful——"

"It was more powerful," said the Master of Gray.

Bothwell looked from one to the other and scratched his head.

"And was not obeyed, sir," cried Maitland fiercely. The Master shrugged his shoulders. There came forward M. de Biran, monsieur with his olive cheeks dark, monsieur loud and exultant.

"He!" cried Biran. He pointed and laughed aloud. "He was sent to plead for her?" And his little eyes blazed at the Master of Gray, his foe, the traitor, beaten at last. And the Master, very pale, said quietly:—

"This gentleman is of the Council?"

"Ay, you would pay dear for my silence. You! Sire and my lords—who dragged your Queen to this plot—who betrayed the plot to Elizabeth—who bade Elizabeth kill your Queen? You would know? He stands there, the Master of Gray!"

"My man, my man, I fear ye will be speaking over true," said his Majesty hastily. "Have him away, Maitland, have him away in guard!" Maitland ran shouting to the door.

"Curse it, man, is it true?" growled Bothwell in Gray's ear. The Master of Gray fronted monsieur, white-faced and smiling still. Monsieur had conquered. The little fanatic fool, scorned, derided time and again, had beaten all the wondrous wit of the Master. Monsieur had his hour and enjoyed it.

He pointed the finger and laughed at the Master's plight. Monsieur was taking revenge on behalf of the Christian faith.

"Is it true, man?" growled Bothwell, impatient. The Master said nothing. One more lie: it would have given him the time to speak, and he could have saved himself. One more lie, and then the truth of the King's design, so he would have saved himself and his fame. But he was the Master of Gray.

He bowed his head and said nothing.

"Ye dirty knave!" roared Bothwell, and struck him.

The King gasped with relief, and snatched at paper and scrawled with trembling fingers. In came the guard.

"Away with him! away with him!" cried the King, thrusting the paper into Maitland's hands.

Between the flickering halberts the Master was led away. He heard behind him the laugh of M. de Biran.

Out to the courtyard and the spring sunlight, up the crowded Canongate he went. Away up the steep dirty street, halting often perforce amid the booths, while the din of chaffering dames rang about him, and a hundred curious eyes scanned his pale face, and curious tongues asked and loudly told who he was. Still he was smiling: he rejoiced in a just wage. Just or unjust, it mattered nothing. There was nothing, he suggested, that could touch him now. He had seen the grave amid the heather.

But certainly just it was. There could be nothing too hard for him to bear. Death, shame, such were

his due. Suddenly amid the booths of the Lawnmarket he startled his guards by laughing aloud. He remembered the glee, he heard the laugh of M. de Biran.

Before him rose the grey half-moon of the Castle battery. A moment they halted while the drawbridge came creaking down, crossed it, and stooped beneath the portcullis. Then up a narrow stair through darkness into a feeble light. The door clanged, the bolts shot clattering home. The Master of Gray was left alone.

## CHAPTER XXXVIII.

### HOW LOGAN CAME LATE.

To Francis Stewart, Earl of Bothwell, entered a gentleman in a hurry.

"Now, Francis, what devil's game have you played this day?"

"Restalrig! Sit down——"

"Curse me if I do! What have you done with Patrick?" Bothwell frowned.

"The whelp! Put him in the Castle for the knave he is."

"Oho, oho! It seems you have had a vision. And what did you see?"

"The beast betrayed Mary."

"And who says that?" cried Logan indignant.

"Why, the King."

"He would." Bothwell stared.

"And Maitland."

"So would he." Bothwell gaped. "A goodly company of prophets. And what said Patrick?"

"Nothing."

"*Ventre du Pape*, nothing?" growled Logan, bending his black brows. "I will have a drink," and he drank and pondered.

"Ye see, man, we had but heard the Queen was murdered, and we were for raising the Border when

Maitland cried out Gray had betrayed us." Logan chuckled.

"So you will not raise the Border? Here is logic!" Bothwell stared at him.

"Why, man, the fact is, we spoke of it no more."

"The fact is, you are fools," growled Logan.

"We talked of the beast Gray and his lies, and Biran——" Down went Logan's cup and clattered.

"Biran?" he roared—"Biran? What has he to do here?"

"He brought the news of the murder, and he——"

"Yes, man, yes, but where is he?"

"He has gone to Dalkeith." Logan squared his shoulders and settled his belt.

"Oho! he has gone to Dalkeith, has he?" he growled. Then suddenly, "Dalkeith?" he roared. "Dalkeith? And did he tell you why?"

"He asked me for Lady Kinaldie, and I said——"

"Oh, you said! God a mercy on all fools!" Out ran the Laird of Restalrig.

Three minutes later he broke breathless into a room in White Horse Close, where Effie and Robin Ogilvy stood side by side waiting.

"Now, Robin—boot and saddle!" he cried.

"Is it true, oh, is it true?" cried Effie, running to him and clasping the mighty arm, while Ogilvy stared.

"Boot, you fool!" roared Logan, and Ogilvy departed hastily. Logan turned to the girl. "True? No, a fool tale. Patrick in prison?" He laughed. "Child, is it like? No, Patrick is off to England —bade me give you farewell—and a kiss, child."

Stooping, Logan took her face in his hands and kissed her mouth. She blushed, and—

"Not true?" she cried happily.

"No, fool lies," said Logan chuckling, and patting her pretty white cheek. "Now, there is game afoot—a knave Biran—we go to catch him, Robin and I."

"And—and there is no danger?"

"Danger? Devil a bit!" Effie drew closer.

"For Robin," she whispered, and blushed.

"Oho! For Robin, eh? No, curse me, no! No worse than from the Kinaldie's charms."

"Lady Kinaldie!" The girl started back flushing with angry eyes.

Robin came in, and Logan turned away chuckling.

"*En route*, Robin," he cried. Robin lingered for a last sight, a glance of farewell. She turned her back on him. He went out without a word. Robin had pride.

The horses clattered on the stones. Effie sat down and tossed her head and took up a book. But she set her chin on her hand and looked away at the tapestry, and her low white brow was puckered as she tried to think.

"Dalkeith, Robin—and spurs," that was the order growled out as they clattered into the Canongate. Gruffly, briefly the story was told, as they galloped on by Prestonfield in the failing light. "So, curse him, we must catch him! And, *ventre du Pape*, I get so weighty, that you will beat me and be at him first. Keep him, Robin, man, I want him."

"Let me catch him!" cried Robin truculently, and Logan let out a deep roar of laughter.

Foot by foot Robin passed ahead of Logan's labouring mare; foot by foot he drew away as they thundered by Gilmerton in the twilight. When Robin swept round the crest of the hill and came clattering on to the Dalkeith causeway, Logan was yards behind.

In the starlight, honest citizens, their honest wives, were leaning out of windows and screaming questions to one another. The godly quiet of Dalkeith was disturbed; and Robin came and reined up hastily on the slippery stones crying:—

"What is it, *mordieu?*" A dozen voices gave him a dozen answers. Then above he heard a woman scream, and he turned and dashed up the winding stair. There in the gloom Lady Kinaldie's little steward beat himself vainly against a locked door. From within her voice rose in a fierce cry:—

"Never! never!" Robin assaulted the door. For reward he heard a laugh, and then a scrape and shuffle of feet and the shrill voice of monsieur.

"*Notre Dame de Fayette!* Have a care, Marie! . . . Come then, come with me! *Pardieu*, I tell you I have the right." Again Ogilvy panting at the door heard the noise of straining feet. He beat upon the panels and cursed monsieur, for the lady cried:—

"Help!" And monsieur hissed.

"It was given, Marie, yes, given me by the Archbishop. *Dame de Fayette*, yes, at last I may——"

"Ah, help, my friends . . . help . . ." And for answer there came the clatter of Robin's hands and feet and his oaths. The while Robin heard the

muffled sound of a struggle—a falling chair—Biran's voice hoarse and low.

"My right, *notre Dame*, my right . . . my father told me . . . ah!" And there came a little cry and the thud of a body falling. Robin grew frantic, and the din he made was great.

"Ho, ho, Papegot!
Fais place aux Huguenots!"

Logan's roar arose. Logan's steps clattered on the stair. Logan came.

"What? What? *Ventre du Pape!*——" Logan sprang at an open door, set his foot against the wall and drove out his leg mightily. The hinges tore away. Logan caught up the door in his arms.

"Ho, ho, Papegot!" Sideways he stood in the passage and swung it rhythmically crashing. Three blows and the lock of monsieur's fortress failed. The door dashed back, and a blaze of light flooded the passage, and a pistol shot roared. Logan, reeling, dropped his battering-ram with a crash, and caught at his shoulder, and sought the shadow swearing.

"Come then! Come all! Infidels! Dogs! Come!" It was the scream of monsieur. His face was scarlet and his eyes ablaze. One hand was dark with blood. Robin ran in on him wildly, cursing—a flash, a roar, and Robin fell forward stabbing vainly at the air. Monsieur laughed. "He has it! Another to hell! The devils are gay to-night! She would have it—and you! Come then, come!" But Logan came not. His oaths were audible. Monsieur looked round over his shoulder. Lady Kinaldie lay, all

golden, with one hand in her bosom, and blood welling about a dagger hilt, crimson on her white breast.

"I bade you come, Marie!" monsieur muttered, staring at her. "No! No! You were traitor! I was right—my father said 'kill'—Marie—said 'kill'." He drew near her with faltering steps muttering, "Marie, Marie!" His eyes were chained upon her. He seemed to come unwilling.

"Ho, ho, Papegot!——"

Monsieur turned, drew his sword, screamed.

"Come, infidel, hither to hell! To hell!" he shrieked. Through the doorway came a door. As monsieur lunged at it, it was lifted on high and brought crashing down upon his head, and M. de Biran bent like an apple in a press and fell beneath it to the ground.

"To hell!" cried Logan, jumping over him. "Curse your silly soul!" He ran to Lady Kinaldie, looked at the wound a moment, left her with a grunt, and turned to Robin. From Robin's forehead the blood was flowing. "You were devilish greedy!" muttered Logan. He glanced at the door and the timorous steward, cried "Fetch the women, then, fool!" and then he looked again at Marie Kinaldie, and broke out in a torrent of foul oaths and blasphemy. The Laird of Restalrig was moved.

Her women were brought, and pale and trembling they bore her away. They came to Logan and told him weeping that her right hand within her bosom was clasped on a locket she wore between her breasts. In the locket was a picture of the Master of Gray.

The Laird of Restalrig demanded wine.

He drank it and ordered the removal of monsieur. But when they picked up M. de Biran he had no top to his head.

Then, for still there was game afoot, Logan rode back to Edinburgh through the night. And he came to the house in White Horse Close, and slowly he climbed the stair. Effie looked up as he entered. Effie seemed to look beyond him. Logan took off his hat and strode up to her and patted her shoulder.

"The—the fact is, he—he will not come, Effie," he said. "The fact is, child, Robin—Robin is dead. I came late."

"Dead?" the girl screamed, starting up.

"Biran the Frenchman shot him. Curse the beast! *Ventre du Pape*, yes, I have a ball in my shoulder and Robin has one in his brain." The girl's breast heaved and her white lips shook.

"Robin, Robin!" she muttered.

Logan invented consolation.

"The fact is, it was the Kinaldie." The girl started back clasping her hands together. "You see, Effie, she was Robin's love, and we rode to save her. Well, child, Biran killed her, and Robin, of course, he would be mad at her death, and he ran in and Biran killed him—Robin, the loon, calling out it was for her sake. . . . I would not greet, lass. The fact is, he was but a fool."

"I—I—I do not greet," the girl stammered proudly, looking at him through tears that welled in the great dark eyes.

"Good," said Logan, and went out. Still there was game afoot.

And Effie fell on her knees by the table and sobbed with her face in her hands, and tortured herself with the thought that her cruelty had driven Robin to his light o' love, to his death.

So fared Effie Gray.

## CHAPTER XXXIX.

### HOW LOGAN SAVED HIS FRIEND.

THE gloom of the prison was broken by a glimmer of light. By the long shaft from the window the ray of dawn came pale. On a wooden bed in a dark corner lay the Master of Gray.

The Master of Gray consoled himself with hexameters, and the murmur of his low voice filled the cell :—

> "Illa, quis et me, inquit, miseram et te perdidit, Orpheu,
> Quis tantus furor? En iterum crudelia retro
> Fata vocant, conditque natantia lumina somnus.
> Jamque vale: feror ingenti circumdata nocte
> Invalidasque tibi tendens, heu non tua! palmas."

Eurydice was lost to him: lost for ever: lost by his own fault.

And suddenly he laughed. He appeared to himself unlike Orpheus. He rose and walked to the light. Down in the shaft through the wall he lay, and he rested his chin on his hands and looked out. It was a world misty, grey, dark. Far away the white walls of Inchkeith glittered amid the still black waters of the Forth, and the black water was framed in a grey horizon of cloud. Dull red were the roofs and walls on the low shore. Field and meadow on the swell of the hills lay bare and gloomy, and all alike in the feeble light.

In the hollows the mist hung heavy; sheer beneath him many a fathom of mist hid the Nor' Loch and the crags of the ravine.

The Master reflected that this was his own country. Slowly he dragged himself to his feet and paced up and down the cell. He thought of the deep-bosomed fields of England smiling in the golden haze of an autumn day. He saw the touch of spring on an English hedgerow, the thorns in a garment of white: he saw the deep still streams and the kingcups ablaze on the bank: he breathed the warm spring breeze heavy with the scent of flowers. And again he laughed at himself and shrank from the land of his love.

Again he lay down in the shaft and peered out. The red houses of Leith caught his eye, and he stared at them and thought of a night fifteen years past. Maitland of Lethington, worn and helpless, lay in his bed; the end of his treacheries had come at last. Lethington's dull eyes searched him: Lethington's pale lips moved.

"The kept faith—the kept faith—nought else will help at the last."

Across the years the faint voice spoke to him the traitor's praise of loyalty. There was no laugh to meet it now. Ay, Lethington had kept faith at the last, and all men knew it, and the honour of it would ever be his.

The Master made a comparison. Himself—he too in the end had kept the faith, he too had sought late his forsworn loyalty. Again he laughed. None would

believe that—none then; none ever. Lethington's honour, Lethington's fame, no share of that for him. The world knew him for a traitor self-confest. So all men would know him always. He was the Master of Gray.

Justice he saw and acknowledged; justice, for no punishment could be over hard for his deserts. And he thought of the girl lying amid the heather, his love, shamed and dead, and he smiled. He, he was exercised about his own hard plight!

From his bosom he took a little heart of gold. It lay warm and dim in his hand, and he turned it over and read:—

"*Aymez loyaulté.*"

The past came back. Her fragrant breath he breathed, her warm lips clung to his once more. He felt the throb of her heart. Blood started to his white cheeks.

"*Aymez loyaulté.*"

Again came the smile on his beautiful lips. Well had he kept her command! So well—he saw the blanched face, her shrinking, cowering form; he heard the sobbing cry.

"God—God forgive you!"

God, it appeared, had not. God was very right. The Master of Gray sat still and smiled at the little golden heart, and turned it over and over with one finger. Arose a good and godly ballad—

> "All Christen men take tent and hear,
> How saul and body are at weir
> (And curse your lazy bones ye loon)."

The Laird of Restalrig chanted: the Laird of Restalrig expostulated: the Laird of Restalrig entered roaring.

"Fat knave!"—he smote the turnkey—"lie there till ye're needed." The turnkey sat upon the part of him most apt, gasping. Logan took the keys and slammed the door.

"A good morn, Patrick—Patrick, you fool!" he cried, and clapped his cousin mightily on the back. The Master hurriedly put his heart away.

"How are you here?"

"By my legs, curse me! And how are you here, Patrick? By your fool folly, curse you!" He mopped his wet face, looked round for wine, and swore. "The fact is, Patrick, I told you so!"

"Yes," said the Master.

"Ho, ho, a sign of grace! Oh, Patrick, Patrick, I have had a night! Biran——" He diverged into blasphemy.

"And what of Biran?" cried the Master.

"Biran—is dead."

"How?"

"The fact is, I am rather strong," said Logan apologetically. "I killed him quick. I am devilish sorry."

The Master shrugged his shoulders. Logan roared out with an oath.

"——ay, for he had killed the Kinaldie, and——"

"Marie Kinaldie?"

"No less. We rode after him, Robin and I. Oh, but the toad was mad. He was screaming out to all

Dalkeith that he had killed her, and, the viper, for once he had struck straight. And Robin ran in on him, like a fool, and lost his brains for his pains!"

"Robin?" the Master screamed—"Robin?" And now Logan shrugged his shoulders.

"Robin goes cheap. A fool the less. Well, Robin lost his brains—and Biran—they were washing his off the floor." The Master swayed to and fro on the edge of the bed. He thought of his sister. His punishment grew greater than he could bear. On all who loved him, on all whom he loved, fell the hand of death. It was his to stand by and see their grief and their agony. He turned his face from Logan and groaned.

Logan whistled. Logan sat down beside him and the wooden bed shrieked. Logan put a great arm round him and patted his shoulder clumsily. On the full red face of the Laird of Restalrig tenderness sat ill at ease.

"The fact is, Patrick, you suffer damnably," he growled. "But man, man, this is the last of it—" he gripped the Master's arm—"the last of it, Patrick, man!"

The Master turned a little. His eyes asked a question unspoken. Logan whistled—it was the tune of another godly ballad.

The net is broken in pieces small,
And we are savit from their shame,
Oor hope was aye and ever sall
Be in the Lord and in His name.

"For, *ventre du Pape*, I held the ace!" He nudged the Master jovially and chuckled. "Hearken

unto Solomon of Restalrig. When you said you were to be a beastly Bayard, I told you——"

"Oh, yes, you told me," the Master groaned wearily.

"The long road saves legs," said Logan, and seemed to find a difficulty in progressing. "I told you. Well, as I say, I told you. Well, the devil knows much, but a woman in love knows more: and our bonny John Maitland is a holy devil, and I, Patrick, I am a woman in love!" He laughed, and looked doubtfully at his cousin. "John Maitland wanted a spy——"

"On me?" said the Master, with a short laugh.

"Ay. Well, better me than another. I was the spy." Again he looked askance at the Master: but the Master only nodded his head and smiled. There was nothing left to happen. So Logan, satisfied, let out a roar of laughter.

"Oh, but an innocent spy was I. Did I know what my good lord wanted? *Ventre du Pape*, how should I, a rough lad from the Lothians? Did I know which side he would be taking? Devil a bit. Oh, Patrick, Patrick," he hugged his cousin, "I was innocent as the dove, I was stupid as—as Robin. Man, everything had to be told me once and again. I got me a scriptorium o' Maitland's letters, and, *tête de diable*, devilish useful they have been!" He paused to chuckle and choke. The Master was frankly a-weary.

"Now, Patrick—down to Restalrig comes Hugh and tells me you have got cast here. I cursed him

and rode off to Bothwell to get the rights of it all. The fact is, I have been cursed slow, but I had to knock out Biran's brains first. Then I went to Maitland, and I had him out of his bed in his shirt. Holy converse we had, *pardieu*.

"'I want the Master,' says I.

"'E'en fetch him then,' says John.

"'That will I, by God,' says I. 'But, man, it will be damnably awkward for you.'

"'Art drunk?' says John.

"'Then bed is my home,' says I, and was going. John gripped my arm.

"'What is your meaning?' says he.

"'To sleep,' says I, for the knave wanted frightening. 'To dream of your letters, my bairn!' Patrick, man, he was green in a wink.

"'Ye'll have them safe?' says John.

"'Ye may count on that,' says I, and I looked him between his dirty little eyes. 'They are in England,' says I. 'And by God, I have the Master free in the morn, or to Walsingham they go.'

"'Is it aught to me?' says John.

"'Three aughts and a figure before 'em,' says I. 'What, do ye not know me for more than a fool yet, curse your shifty eyes. *Ventre du Pape*, do I not know your dirty game. The fact is, John, ye are but a fool knave,' says I. 'James and you, you will be raising all hell now Mary is dead, and thousands of crowns you will want from England to pacify you, curse you. Now, my bonny bairn, if Walsingham has it under your hand that you and James were

anxious to kill the woman, how much will you get from Elizabeth? *Ventre du Pape*, is that aught to you, you knave? And you, ye loon, you are to prison a man to save your slimy hide! Death and hell, no!' I said. 'The Master freed or I blow on your game. And fiddler's wages you will get then, John, curse you.' Then the loon grinned at me like a skull, and was walking to a silly bell, till I laughed at him. 'Ay, ring it,' says I, 'ring it, and have me prisoned too. Then, by the fiend, you are fairly into the fire. Do you take me for a babe? The letters are safe in Carlisle, and if I be not there in two days, to Walsingham they go.' John sat down plump; you would not have thought his bones could make so much noise. Well, have it short—he saw he was held: he gave me an order: Bayard waits at the gate."

The Master smoothed his curls. His brow was heavy.

"And the letters?" he said, and looked at his cousin.

Logan tapped his chest and paper crackled. He laughed. The Master did not.

"And what then?" he asked. Logan sprang up.

"What then? *Ventre du Pape*, the whole cursed game! We hold the ace! Go you to England, Patrick, and sell them to Walsingham!"

"And you?"

"The fact is, there are also letters from Walsingham," said Logan. Then he chuckled. "And, curse me, I think John might buy them."

The Master rose and walked up and down. Intrigue and treachery rose insistent to claim him for their own. It was just, he confessed, the one just punishment for him. He saw no way of escape, he dared seek none. For already he had striven to break the bonds of hell, and thereby he had wrought only shame and death. To and fro in the prison he walked, while Logan looked at him curiously. The work of his life he saw very clear, and he groaned. There was Marie's white breast gaping red and wet—the shattered brow and Robin's curls dappled with blood —his sister sobbing bereft—and then, conquering all else, in a flaming light, his love lay crushed and writhing, her torn habit, the gravel in her hair, even the smile on her pain-wrought face, the glad welcome to death in her eyes—nothing was spared him. So he would see her ever in life, in death, his love shamed and slain. He groaned again and leant against the wall hiding his face. No censure, no penalty could be too hard, but the hardest of all were his. Death was adjudged too light. To him death would come late, not till he had fallen low as a man might fall. More dread than the past, there rose before him visions of the years to come. He saw himself selling his honour to this man and that, time and again—then waiting in anterooms known and despised—too base for a tool of the vilest; he saw the debauched, traitorous face as he lay a-dying in torment hopeless and alone. He saw the curling lip, he heard the scorn with which all down the years men have spoken of the Master of Gray. Ay! That (and he smiled) would be just.

The old life, the old life, he was fit for that alone. Hope, faith, love, they were idle dreams, had led him astray. The end of all his striving was no more than shame. Let the world have its way then, make of him what it would! Dreams were over.

He turned and took Logan's arm.

"Let us go!" he cried. He was the Master of Gray.

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